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**The *peripeteia*, an analysis of reversal speeches by Barbara Bush, Richard Nixon, and
Lyndon B. Johnson**

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Chapter 1

An introduction to the Peripeteia

In The Art of Public Speaking, Stephan Lucas discusses public speaking as a form of empowerment.¹ It is a way, he describes, of making a difference in the things that people care about. In times of crisis, it can become a necessary means for making a difference in personal lives, public lives, or the world in general. It is in these times of crisis that what is known as a *peripeteia*, or reversal of fortunes, must take place.

In his Poetics, Aristotle defines *peripeteia* as “a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity.”² Further, he wrote that a *peripeteia* is most effective when it comes to Drama particularly in a Tragedy. The works of William Shakespeare inevitably come to mind when considering the genre of tragedy. Indeed, many of his works are celebrated for exactly the way in which the characters within them experience dramatic *peripity*.

Two fine examples of this occur in both Romeo and Juliet, and Othello. In the former, the two title characters meet and fall in love despite the feud between their two families. They are married in secrecy to honor the love they have found together, and entertain thoughts of ending the feud with their newly formed bond. However, due to ages of hatred between their two houses, circumstances quickly spiral out of their control. By the end of the play a complete *peripeteia* has occurred, and instead of living happily married

¹ Lucas, *The Art of Public Speaking*, p 6

² Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument*, p 344-345

with one another they are both dead, each having taken their own lives in the name of love for the other.

In *Othello*, the title character begins the play not only having recently risen to one of the highest military ranks of his city, but has also recently married, in secret, the beautiful Desdemona, the daughter of a high ranking city official. Despite being a Moor, he has climbed to the upper ranks of the city's hierarchy, and seemingly is set to live happily ever after. Shakespeare would rarely leave matters be though, nor would his audiences rarely have it any other way. Throughout the play *Othello* is poisoned by the words of the villainous Iago, and in the end a *peripeteia* takes place when he not only loses his rank, but also when he takes the life of his wife under false pretenses.

It is important to note that *peripity* need not always be concerned with tragedy. Aristotle has defined *peripeteia* as a reversal of the action. Humphrey House, author of *Aristotle's Poetics*, goes a step further and defines it as a "reversal of intention."³ This definition takes into account the "thought" or the *daimio* exercised by the character. House describes it as "holding the wrong end of the stick." *Peripeteia* can then be determined to be deciding the proper side of an argument or event and moving to that side.

Another definition, more recently interpreted, comes from noted literary critic Frank Kermode. He defines it as a "disconfirmation followed by a consonance; the interest of having our expectations falsified is obviously related to our wish to reach discovery by an unexpected route. It has nothing to do with our reluctance to get there at all. So that in assimilating the *peripeteia* we are enacting that readjustment of our expectations in regard to an end."⁴ This definition leads to a sense of accomplishment that can occur when a

³ House, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p 96

⁴ Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, p 18

peripeteia is properly enabled. Here it is clear that the outcome lies not in tragedy as with the Shakespearean example noted earlier, but in triumph.

In accomplishing a triumphant occurrence of *peripeteia* the person or persons involved must present proof that the proposed outcome is good, and that those who are making the proposition are also good and worth trusting. Aristotle said that “speakers themselves are made trustworthy by three things; for there are three things, besides demonstrations, which make us believe. These are intelligence, virtue, and good will.”⁵ He also believed that ethical proof “is wrought when the speech is so spoken as to make the speaker credible; for we trust good men more and sooner, as a rule, about everything.”⁶

This thesis will analyze three speakers in separate situations in their quest to complete *peripeteias*. Through their speeches each of them not only had to show that a circumstance was in need of turning, but that they had the intelligence, virtue, and good will that Aristotle believed a speaker needed to convince their audiences that there was truth in their words. The speakers and speeches to be examined are, Barbara Bush’s commencement address to Wellesley College in 1990, Lyndon B. Johnson’s Right to Vote speech in 1965, and Richard Nixon’s Checkers speech from the 1952 presidential campaign.

Aristotle focuses a great deal of his attention on the audience, each of these three speakers had little choice but to do the same. He describes ethos (credibility) as the audience’s perception of a speaker based on the speech itself. Should the audience find a speaker to be sound and credible then the stage has been set for a speaker to accomplish a *peripeteia*. As Aristotle goes on to say in The Rhetoric, “the hearers themselves become the

⁵ Jebb, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p 69

⁶ Jebb, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p 6

instruments of proof when emotion is stirred in them by the speech; for we give our judgments in different ways under the influence of pain and of joy, of liking and of hatred.”⁷

In this thesis, chapters two and three address the role of *peripeteia* in reversing the personal fortunes of the speaker. With Barbara Bush, as explained in chapter two, there was limited credibility upon entering the speaking situation, and her speech would not have succeeded if she did not address that issue to the satisfaction of the audience before her. In chapter three Richard Nixon responds to an attack on his credibility and offers very personal details in his address to the nation to respond. The final chapter examines the effort of Lyndon Johnson to use the *peripeteia* to reverse the fortunes of a nation.

Isocrates stated in his Antidosis, “...there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish.” This thesis will argue that in each of the three speeches a *peripeteia* has taken place through the power of speech. Each chapter will discuss the situation preceding the speech, the speech itself, and outcome of the speech.

⁷ Jebb, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p 6

Chapter 2

The Wellesley College Address

by Barbara Bush

Humor is the only test of gravity, and gravity of humor: for a subject which will not bear raillery is suspicious, and a jest which will not bear serious examination is false wit.

-Aristotle

Introduction

The first, and perhaps most important, challenge that every public speaker deals with is the issue of credibility. Credible speakers command the respect and attention of audiences from start to finish whereas uncredible speakers must fight to win over their audiences or risk failing in their attempts to deliver messages. In the event that speakers know their credibility is in doubt, they must do something to change that. They must accomplish a *peripeteia*, a reversal of circumstances, or a turning point in a particular situation.

In 1990 Barbara Bush, a non-college graduate and wife of then President George H. W. Bush, was asked to be the commencement speaker at Wellesley, a private women's college. The reaction to this invitation was a show of hostility from a large portion of the Wellesley graduating class, a group of women who believed strongly in female empowerment through education. This chapter will begin by reviewing the situation that the

First Lady was walking into, and will conclude with how her use of *ethos* led to an incredible *peripeteia* in which a speaker with very low initial credibility walked away from the situation with very high terminal credibility. The primary argument is that Barbara Bush was able to convert the audience's initial reaction of rejection into approval due to her intelligent use and skillful building of *ethos*. By defending her life choices through rational and intelligent means along with the use of humor, Bush was able to turn a situation stacked against her to a celebration of victory for all involved.

The Situation Preceding *Peripeteia*

The senior class at Wellesley College votes each year on their choice of a commencement speaker. In 1990 they voted for Alice Walker, a noted American author and feminist who, in 1983, who had won a Pulitzer Prize for her critically acclaimed novel The Color Purple. This choice happily coincided with the graduating class's choice of color that same year. When, shortly after being invited to speak at the event, Walker declined their invitation for personal reasons, University officials had to scramble to find a suitable replacement speaker for the coming graduation. They then contacted their second choice, Barbara Bush, who accepted graciously despite a busy schedule hosting a foreign relations visit with the Gorbachevs to improve relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

While most of the student population of Wellesley was excited that an important public figure like the First Lady had been asked to speak, a growing crowd of dissenters

quickly emerged. Two months before graduation over one hundred fifty students, roughly twenty-six percent of the senior body, signed a petition in protest asking the University to cancel its invitation to Mrs. Bush.⁸ The petition read, “To honor Barbara Bush as a commencement speaker is to honor a woman who has gained recognition through the achievements of her husband, which contradicts what we have been taught over the past four years.”⁹ Further, 452 letters expressing concern over this choice were received by the Wellesley administration over a six month period, and 7,000 news stories were printed about it worldwide.¹⁰

The problem was not that she was the First Lady; the perceived problem was that she had done nothing on her own merit. By her own admission she had dropped out of college to marry the only man she had ever loved.¹¹ The mission of most people attending Wellesley College was not to find a husband, but to obtain a degree and find a respectable career on which to build a life. To many, having a commencement speaker who took the seemingly opposite path in life, placing marriage before education and career was an atrocious error.

When reporters arrived on campus to ask questions, Susana Cardenas, one of the students responsible for circulating the petition, told them that Barbara Bush was “the furthest she can be from the ideals of a progressive, feminist institution where you’re taught to work hard to be recognized for your own contributions. If she hadn’t been married to this guy who happens to be president, we never would have heard of her.”¹² Instantly the press picked up on the controversy, and suddenly more than just the students at Wellesley were

⁸ Wertheimer, *Leading Ladies of the White House*, p 206

⁹ McCarthy, *Commonweal*, p 408

¹⁰ Hertz and Reverby, *Gentility, Gender, and Political Protest: The Barbara Bush Controversy at Wellesley College*, p 596

¹¹ Killian, *Barbara Bush*, p 145

¹² Killian, *Barbara Bush*, p 147

aware of it as well. “People are saying we don’t think that Barbara Bush was good enough to be our graduation speaker because she raised kids,” said one senior, Donna E. Dodson. “Why wasn’t my mother asked to speak? She stayed at home and raised kids. Mrs. Bush is famous because she is married to George Bush. We wanted to hear from a woman who had made many gains on her own.”¹³

The campus story of the petition was picked up by a local suburban newspaper, then broke in the Boston Globe and went out on the AP wire. Editorials and opinion pieces, television interviews, letters to the editor, cartoons, and President George Bush’s comments on it at a press conference made the protest national, even international, news.¹⁴ While the whole of the nation may not have been watching from the edge of their seats to see the final outcome of the situation, several important individuals and news outlets had become aware of what was happening and were now watching with great scrutiny. Chief among these individuals was Barbara Bush herself. The speech she had intended on using was a stock speech she had previously given at other commencement ceremonies, but she knew that this time she would have to say a few things differently if she intended to win over her audience and achieve any measure of success in the speech.¹⁵

An Unwelcomed First Lady Using Ethos

The Aristotelian art of rhetoric, which grew out of the sophistic tradition that privileged the ability to argue for any position on any given topic, transcends the often erratic

¹³ Collison, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

¹⁴ Hertz and Reverby, *Gentility, Gender, and Political Protest: The Barbara Bush Controversy at Wellesley College*, p 596

¹⁵ Wertheimer, *Leading Ladies of the White House*, p 206

or unpredictability of personality from one person to the next.¹⁶ So, the emphasis of rhetorical invention shifts from personal ingenuity on an average everyday basis to discovering the available means of persuasion in specific relation to an event or set of people. In other words, a speaker must speak directly to the audience before them, and not simply craft a speech to be used verbatim over and over again, or, as Walter Cherry points out in his article *Self-Representation in Written Discourse*, speakers must have or create a persona or *ethos* that is directly tied to the rhetorical task at hand. As mentioned early, the speech that the First Lady had originally planned to use was a stock speech which she had delivered before. With the situation before her, Bush had to tailor the speech and her *ethos* to counteract the hostility that had been emanating from a faction of Wellesley students.

With regards to the *ethos* (or character) of a public speaker, this crucial element has been separated into three categories by James McCroskey in his book An Introduction to Rhetorical Communication. The first of those categories is initial credibility. This is the *ethos* a speaker has before they begin speaking. Things that affect this include the speaker's titles, books they have written, education, and even the state of their dress. The second category is derived credibility. This is the *ethos* a speaker gains during their speech. It can be influenced by the use of language, humor, professionalism, and relating to the audience. The final of these three categories is terminal credibility. This is the *ethos* a speaker has when they finish their speech. The entire speech as a whole is reflected in terminal credibility, not just the manner in which the speaker brings their discourse to a close. This chapter will address each of these three phases separately while focusing mainly on the development of derived credibility.

¹⁶ Mythology of Voice, p 23

Initial Credibility

In the case of the Wellesley College commencement address, Barbara Bush, despite being the First Lady, began the day with a low amount of initial credibility. Her lack of a formal education was a huge detriment in this situation, and she had to find a way to enter the scene with her head held high. At this point she could have taken the easiest approach available to her and brought her husband, the leader of the free world. However, such an approach, while likely to impress many, would have only upset her detractors even further, and likely had a negative effect on her later attempts at derived credibility. How would it look to the people asserting that her only claim to credibility was that she was married to the President if she brought the very man they equated with her success.

In this case, she had to find a more clever means of obtaining the initial credibility she had been missing. As mentioned earlier, the Gorbachevs were coming to visit to continue discussions of the Cold War during the same timeframe that the speech was to be delivered. Instead of bringing her husband to boost her credibility she brought Raisa Gorbachev who had earned the Russian equivalent of a PhD in philosophy, had taught college-level courses, and was a noted fundraiser throughout the world for the fight against children's leukemia. By doing so, she was making a statement that if such a successful, world-renowned female figure could see fit to stand by her side, then she must be doing something worth respecting.

Additionally, in such situations many people expect the speaker to begin with an apology to try and smooth over the situation and placate their attackers. In our recent political history we need look no further than the Clinton presidency and the vast amount of apologizing that the United States, as a nation, was privy to hearing and receiving after the Monica Lewinsky debacle. The First Lady, however, did no such thing. In this particular situation an apology would have been more likely to convince the protestors that they were right in petitioning against her. Instead, in a move of classical graciousness, she thanked the university president for the kind introduction, thanked the other honored guests, and addressed the crowd of graduates.

Derived Credibility

With initial credibility covered, Bush moved to increase her derived credibility. She began the speech and bolstered her *ethos* by stating that she had been previously asked to speak at Wellesley some ten years prior based upon her and her husband's experiences in the Republic of China. As Kevin Dean offered in a 1992 spring issue of *Argumentation and Advocacy*, "Ten years ago when she had been invited to the campus, her status, as wife to then ambassador Bush, had not been in question; why should it be now?"¹⁷ Not only would mentioning this function to increase her credibility with this particular audience, but her reminding them of her credentials likely served to increase her ability to connect with them.

Now instead of being viewed as strictly an outsider she has shown that the stage has previously been offered to her. Stephen E. Lucas, author of The Art of Public Speaking,

¹⁷ Dean, *Argumentation and Advocacy*, p 194

indicates that this personal connection is something that must be done at the outset of the speech and is perhaps the most important part of public speaking.¹⁸ Without making a connection to the audience, speakers are easily viewed as uncaring, or not interested in those they are addressing. An audience that has convinced itself of such would be far less likely to listen to, respect, or accept much of anything a speaker might try to communicate.

From there, she could have easily started moving into the body of her speech; but, instead, she again reached out to the conflicted members of the student body by saying, “Wellesley, you see, is not just a place ... but an idea ... an experiment in excellence in which diversity is not just tolerated, but is embraced.” This clever move appealed to the sense of acceptance that surely those educated women must have been taught during their stay at Wellesley. Further, she did not refer to Wellesley as an institution, or any other derivative of the word university, she instead used the word idea. Our ability, as humans, to comprehend ideas is generally associated with higher levels of thinking, advanced reasoning, and internal reflection. Such things showcase our talents to not only gain and adapt new knowledge, but to apply that knowledge in ways that benefit the whole of humanity. By referring to Wellesley in such a way she was paying the University, and its students, a high complement.

Beyond the ramifications of ideas, Bush, herself, was the perfect example of diversity amid their ranks that should not simply be tolerated, but embraced. The statement was almost confrontational on a simple level as it subtly implied that if they could not tolerate the difference between Bush’s education level, lifestyle, political party and their own, then their education may have failed them. Now instead of judging the speaker before them, Bush had

¹⁸ Lucas, *The Art of Public Speaking*, p 225

cleverly asked them to look inside themselves to decipher what kind of tolerance and acceptance that they wanted to embrace.

Next, she continued to develop the idea of accepting diversity by relating the story of a young pastor trying to explain a story to a group of children that required them to choose whether they were a giant, wizard, or dwarf. A quandary occurred when one of the children explained to the pastor that she was in fact, a mermaid; not one of the three choices he had initially provided yet she insisted on being included in the activity. This story, on the surface, appeared to be, and functioned as a testament to the spirit and teachings of Wellesley by showing that there are always more paths to choose than what might be set before someone, and that each path, no matter how different or possibly unexpected, is just as noble and worthwhile as any other so long as the person traveling it is pleased with what they have done or accomplished. It also served as a sort of “golden rule” function developing the idea that Bush’s own personal choices in life were to be tolerated and accepted in the same way that she’d expect anyone in her audience to tolerate and accept choices from one another.

In this sense, the audience had chosen whether they were a giant, wizard, or dwarf, and Bush had chosen, though not aloud, to be the brave little girl who had declared herself a mermaid. Kathleen Jamieson notes, in her book Eloquence in an Electronic Age, that narratives have a particularly eloquent quality, especially when the story is removed from the speaker. With that in mind, the story functioned to help defuse the controversy that had been brewing around her by declaring that no one in attendance, the First Lady included, had made the wrong choice in their life’s path. To set that idea deeper in the minds of her audience, she finished the story by saying that diversity requires the “effort to learn about and respect

difference, to be compassionate with one another, to cherish our own identity... and to accept unconditionally the same in others.”

From here on Bush, trusting that she had turned many of the audience to her side or, at the very least, convinced them to hear this mermaid out, she takes two approaches to building her *ethos* and completing the *peripeteia*. These rhetorical strategies were justification and humor. The idea of justification was to show that she had made the correct decisions in what is certainly a very different life path than her audience has chosen to live, and had made a positive difference in the world despite her lack of formal education. The use of humor was something she was actually well known for, and readily supported the ideas she used for justification in most instances it can be found. It was a tactic that she used not only to connect with various audiences, but also, by her own admission, was used to make herself feel more comfortable.¹⁹ When the George Bush first took office Barbara told her speech writers that she wanted her talks to be short, funny, and leave the audience with something to remember.²⁰

While justifying her decisions, Bush presented her audience with three major decisions she had made in her life to that point. Each of the three is a valued life goal that many of the people in her audience were likely to respond to very well. These decisions were, believing in something bigger than herself, her marriage to George Bush, and keeping the human connections with friends and family in her life.

The first major decision she pointed to was to believe in something bigger than yourself. She purposefully shied away from controversial topics and focused on things that

¹⁹ Wertheimer, *Leading Ladies of the White House*, p 201

²⁰ Gould, *American First Ladies; Their lives and Their Legacy*, p 621

interested her; women, work and literacy.²¹ In Bush's life, she chose to champion the fight for literacy, and reminded the audience of just that. Her social programs and stance on the idea were well known. Shortly after becoming First Lady she established the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy – a private, Washington-based foundation that solicited grants from public and private organization to support literacy programs. During the same year as the speech she wrote a book from the perspective of her family's cocker spaniel titled, *Millie's Book* whose profits of approximately one million dollars went straight to her foundation.²² The idea of bringing up her cause was specifically to combat the idea that she was unworthy of speaking to her audience based on her education level. While she may have dropped out of college, she was still making a significant and worthwhile difference in the world by helping to educate Americans less fortunate than herself.

The second decision she discussed was marrying George Bush. Much of the opposition to her being appointed as the commencement speaker was due to her only being known through her marriage. To fully complete a *peripeteia* with her audience it was important that she approach this subject. By stating that her decision to marry George was the most important decision of her life she gave added importance to this decision. When she brought up that she married him because he made her laugh she justified the ability for one to be happy with the decisions they make. This was her way of saying that she did not care whether or not people knew who she was because she had married a certain person, instead, she cared that **she** was happy with the choices she had made of her own accord.

The third decision involved an appeal to her audience's emotion. Bush acknowledged that most of her audience could or would potentially go on to fantastic careers;

²¹ Wertheimer, *Leading Ladies of the White House*, p 203

²² Gould, *American First Ladies; Their lives and Their Legacy*, p 619

but regardless of their future career path, they should continue to keep the human connections to those most close and important to them. This was an important idea she wanted to convey to them, and fulfilled some of the obligations that a commencement speaker is often expected to do in regards to giving advice for the future. As far as she was concerned, her choice to be a dedicated member of a family and a community of friends was just as important as any career path she could have chosen. It is these human connections that keep a person from disappearing into their work life, and keeping close the people that truly make life worth living.

As Pamela Kilian points out in her book Barbara Bush, the First Lady didn't apologize for her lack of formal education or express regret that she had no career. Instead, she stood up for the decisions that had shaped her life – being a loyal wife, loving mother, cheerful homemaker, and volunteer worker.²³ Those three concepts were specifically chosen in order to address not only the audience that had opposed her, but also the audience that was glad to have her present.

Interspersed throughout and supporting these ideas of justification, one can easily find Bush's uses of humor. This was nothing new in a Barbara Bush speech; and, in fact, she very often used self-deprecating humor as an art in public situations.²⁴ For the First Lady, appropriate levels of self disclosure and the ability to laugh at one's self became doors to relationships of trust and friendship.²⁵ The ability to make light of a situation is indeed a rare gift; and in the Wellesley College address, it was a gift that certainly helped the First Lady to capture her audience.

²³ Kilian, *Barbara Bush*, p 145

²⁴ Wertheimer, *Leading Ladies of the White House*, p 201

²⁵ Dean, *Argumentation and Advocacy*, p 194

Though the story of the little girl calling herself a mermaid drew the first set of laughs, the first true attempt at humor came when Bush addressed the fact that Alice Walker had originally been asked to speak that day. The passage begins, “Now I know your first choice for today was Alice Walker (guess how I know!), known for *The Color Purple*.” The “guess how I know” was said in jest with a broad telling smile to explain to her audience that she had been paying attention to the media reports surfacing around the event. Immediately afterwards she followed it up with her trademark self deprecation by stating, “Instead you got me — known for ... the color of my hair!” This last portion of the passage elicited a rousing laughter from the crowd, and certainly helped to humanize her in front of them.

The next instance of humor came after making a serious, but lighthearted point with the following phrase from a popular movie at the time, Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, “Find the joy in life, because as Ferris Bueller said on his day off ... ‘Life moves pretty fast. Ya don’t stop and look around once in a while, ya gonna miss it!’” The audience, largely a group of people at the age range the movie had targeted, applauded loudly after having heard the film reference, and Bush, ever the quick thinker on her feet, quickly went off the page to capitalize on that energy: “I am not going to tell George you clapped more for Ferris than you did for George.” Again, the audience responded with laughter in appreciation of her willingness to poke fun not only at herself but also at her absent husband.

Bush’s final bit of humor came just at the end of her speech and was surrounded by a motivational final thought. After offering an encouraging thought about what each member of the audience will end up doing after graduation, she added with a broad smile, “And who knows? Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow in my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the President’s spouse. I wish him well!”

This particular quote functioned on several levels. First, it appealed to the high expectations that Wellesley graduates hold for themselves by stating that they may preside over the nation's most powerful home not merely as the President's spouse, but possibly as the President. Second, it once again provided the audience with a sense that the path Bush chose was indeed an admirable one. Third, it appealed to the ideals that an empowered group of female graduates would likely hold dear to them. And finally, it used yet another humorous push at the end of it when she wished the future president well eliciting a large applause and belt of laughter from her audience.

Terminal Credibility

In some ways, for Plato, truth, and thus presence, is divine and mystical; it is out there in the realm of the ideal; and at the same time, it is deeply internal, present in our souls. Truth does not exist in words, although it is our words that provide access to it.²⁶ In the end, as with many things, the Wellesley College speech must be judged by time itself. In the moment of the speech, a true high note of acceptance was achieved. Though it was through the power of a strong distinct voice that led to this truth, it was the overall message and internal cues that lead to the true understanding between audience and speaker. A resounding standing ovation and congratulations all around from staff and students can attest to that. The reactions from the following weeks, months, and years are a far more telling judgment.

²⁶ Mythology of Voice, p 24

Carol Johnson Johns, a medical professor and onetime acting president of Wellesley, said afterwards, “I’d like to spank some of those young women. I think they’re missing the boat if they don’t appreciate the satisfaction and fulfillment of a significant relationship with someone important to you and with your family, as well as the things you can contribute as a volunteer... I think to tear her down because she doesn’t have a profession degree or a professional career is a miscarriage of value systems.”²⁷ This may be but one reaction to the situation that occurred, but that voice is an important one. Perhaps more telling is that Bush was ranked number one in the Gallup’s annual “Most Admired Women” Poll 1991-1993, and remained in top five throughout the 90’s after the speech was given.²⁸

Conclusion

Since the earliest days of rhetoric, character and competence have both been strongly tied to the credibility of a speaker. The worry has always been that a person who could exist as a dynamic speaker might be tempted to spread messages with little concern for virtue and honesty thus creating chaos. The true rhetor shuns the temptation to abuse his or her gifts, and instead does all in their power to speak with as much truth, honesty, and conviction as possible. Barbara Bush deserves to be given credit for having the character and conviction to stand by the choices she made in life and willingness she showed to stand before others and defend those choices.

Returning to the ideas that Aristotle defined in regards to good speakers, Bush displayed intelligence, virtue, and goodwill. The choices she made in how to address the

²⁷ Kilian, *Barbara Bush*, p 147

²⁸ Wertheimer, *Leading Ladies of the White House*, p 187

dissenting portion of her audience showed intelligent discourse in response to the challenge before her. Bush's virtuous nature and background helped to show her audience that she was worthy of their attention. And the goodwill she showed the crowd through defining the ideologies of Wellesley and by expressing her hopes for the future of those before her helped to complete the reversal of opinion and circumstance that she had entered the situation at the University with.

As has been shown, the First Lady successfully completed an instance of *peripeteia*. She entered a hostile situation well prepared, and spoke fearlessly with conviction. From the very beginning of her appearance on the stage with Raisa Gorbachev standing proudly at her side she began the movement towards swaying the crowd she addressed. She then spoke to the crowd justifying her life choices by explaining them in turn, speaking on their importance, and adding additional appeals to them through the use of humor.

Despite some who raised their voices to denounce the choice of Bush as their commencement speaker, she still had the courage to stand before them. As shown throughout this analysis, by speaking with genuine honesty and appealing to the core beliefs of her skeptical audience she was able to complete the *peripeteia* and win the respect and admiration of those in attendance. That, in and of itself, is worthy of lasting respect.

Chapter 3

The Checkers Speech

by Richard M. Nixon

The only stable state is the one in which all men are equal before the law.

-Aristotle

An Ominous Start to the Campaign

In 1952, just six years into an already promising political career, Richard Milhous Nixon was asked to be the Republican candidate for Vice President of the United States in General Dwight D. Eisenhower's campaign for the presidency. It was the opportunity of a lifetime, and, after accepting, it catapulted Nixon onto the nation scene. Their campaign was built on promises to fight the spread of Communism, protect the lives of American soldiers, and to restore morality to the White House by removing the corruption that they claimed had overtaken it.

The campaign had been running smoothly until the New York *Post*, on September 18th, 1952, carried the headline "Secret Nixon Fund" and ran an accompanying front page story by Leo Katcher that was headed "Secret Rich Men's Trust Fund Keeps Nixon In Style Far Beyond His Salary." The story began: "The existence of a 'millionaires club' devoted exclusively to the financial support of Senator Nixon, GOP Vice-Presidential candidate, was revealed today. So far Nixon has received \$16,000 through a trust fund set up by the 'club'

after his election to the Senate in November, 1950. The total amount of the fund and how much still remains to be expended during the current year was not disclosed.”²⁹

Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic nominee for President, made a speech on campaign ethics that same day in what was almost certainly a jab at the Republican campaign. “Ethics were more important than victory,” he said. “Victory can be bought too dearly.”³⁰

Stevenson’s speech seemed all that much more timely since the night before Nixon was quoted as saying, in regards to the Democratic administration in office at the time, “What corruption means to all of us is that every time we pick up our paper, every day, we read about a scandal. You know, as a matter of fact, this administration is going to go down in history as a scandal-a-day administration because you read about another bribe, you read about another tax fix, you read about another gangster getting favors from the government... and are sick and tired of it.”³¹

To further complicate matters, that same afternoon General Eisenhower, campaigning in Iowa, was stressing the need to change the moral climate in Washington and the need for unsullied public officials the day the first stories about the Nixon Fund appeared. The General promised to drive the “crooks and cronies” from power and bring a Republican “Honest Deal” to Washington to replace the Democratic “Fair Deal.” “When we are through,” he declared, “the experts in shady and shoddy government operations will be on their way back to the shadowy haunts in the sub-cellars of American politics from which they came.”³²

²⁹ Katcher, “Secret Rich Men’s Trust Fund Keeps Nixon In Style Far Beyond His Salary.” *New York Post* 18 Sept. 1952: 1

³⁰ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 102

³¹ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 102

³² Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 101

Meanwhile in Washington, panicked groups and committees were moving quickly at Republican and Democratic National Headquarters. The Democrats, surprised and delighted by a windfall of incalculable value, rushed to the offensive as can be clearly seen in the Adlai Stevenson speech previously mentioned. National Chairman Stephan Mitchell demanded – via a mimeographed statement, press interviews, and radio and television appearances – that Eisenhower throw Nixon off the ticket at once or eat his fulsome observations on “public morals.”³³

Despite the outpouring of concern over Nixon’s involvement in the campaign, Eisenhower issued a statement that “the facts will show that Nixon would not compromise with what is right.” He said that Nixon was “an honest man” and that he would put “all the facts before the people.” Privately, however, he sent word to Nixon that directly stated his desire to “get to the bottom of this thing.”³⁴

Six years later Nixon recalled, “You have to expect in a campaign that your integrity, your loyalty, your honesty, your intellectual honesty may all be questioned. That’s fair game. You have got to be able to take it. In questioning my integrity and trying to prove it was bad, they questioned the integrity of the Republican party, the judgment of General Eisenhower in selecting me and approving me as a candidate, and the whole ‘mess in Washington’ issue. I realized that if I failed I would be off the ticket, of course. I also believed there would be a great risk that the ticket would lose, and that I would carry that responsibility for the balance of my life.”³⁵

³³ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 110

³⁴ Brodie, *Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character*, p 280

³⁵ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 128-129

So it was that Arthur Summerfield, chair of the Republican National Committee, arranged a nationwide hook-up of 64 NBC television stations, 194 CBS stations, and the entire 560 station Mutual Broadcasting System.³⁶ The address would be one-half hour, and would occur in the evening of Tuesday, September 23rd.

The Analysis

This chapter will closely examine two approaches that Nixon used in his speech that evening to accomplish his *peripeteia*. Those approaches were to establish himself as one of the common people, an everyday American just like those who were watching at home on their television sets, and to set out on a counteroffensive to refute the scrutiny that he had recently come under and turn its full attention onto the Democratic campaign. It was not just that his integrity was challenged; it was the possible consequences generally. If he got off the ticket, it would have been the first time in the history of our country that such a thing happened; by the same token, if the Republicans lost, he would be the scapegoat.

One of the Common People

It has long been known that politicians in the United States cannot hope to win an election by catering only to the upper class. It is the common person that the politician must tailor their messages too, because that is what America is made up of, and that is who decides, in the end, who will be in office and who will not. In the days leading up to what is

³⁶ Bochin, Richard Nixon: Rhetorical Strategist, p 36

now referred to as the Checkers Speech; Nixon had fallen out of favor with this demographic. They had stopped trusting him due to the allegations and rumors floating around the country. Eisenhower's advisers were known to be searching for a way to dump Nixon, and the General was a man who at this stage followed his advisers almost blindly.³⁷

Nixon knew that he no choice, but to convince the American public of his sincerity. While speaking to William Rogers, a close advisor who would go to take the position of Deputy-Attorney-General for the Eisenhower Administration after the election, in the days before the speech Nixon said, "If I can't convince people that I'm honest, I shouldn't be on the ticket."³⁸ With this in mind, he began the address by ensuring the American public that he was there to speak to them directly.

From the very first words of the address he begins to place himself as one of the American people. "My Fellow Americans" he said. The speech could have begun with such things as "Good evening America" or "Thank you for offering me your time this evening," but to have done so might have set himself apart from his viewing audience from the start. He then furthered the notion of being similar to the audience in the next line of the speech as he stated, "I come before you tonight as a candidate for the Vice Presidency and as a man whose honesty and integrity has been questioned."

In many situations such as this it is of the utmost importance to humanize yourself as much as possible. The office of the Vice President is a position that only one person can hold at any given time. This, in itself, creates a certain mystique around the person holding the title. Had Nixon failed to mention the second part about how he was a man whose credibility had be brought to question he would have risked losing his audience before he had

³⁷ Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of a Self Made Man*, p 97

³⁸ Interview with William P. Rogers, New York, September 13th, 1986

even finished his introduction. The office of the Vice President may be a symbol of American politics, but being merely a man under attack makes someone mortal, subject to harm, and able to be redeemed.

He then immediately moves on and, in a way, offers the American people an invitation to judge the situation at hand with an Aristotelian maneuver. At first glance the passage seems to be *forensic* in nature as it examines the past, but the purpose of it was actually *epideictic* in nature as it gave his audience something to consider for the near future.

Now, the usual political thing to do when charges are made against you is to either ignore them or to deny them without giving details. I believe we've had enough of that in the United States, particularly with the present Administration in Washington, D.C. To me the office of the Vice Presidency of the United States is a great office, and I feel that the people have got to have confidence in the integrity of the men who run for that office and who might obtain it.

Here he has given the viewers the chance to decide what kind of people they would like to have in control of the White House. As Richard Fried covers in his book, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*, throughout his presidency, Truman, the current President in office, often dealt with accusations that the federal government was harboring Soviet spies at the highest level. Testimony in Congress on this issue garnered national attention, and thousands of people were fired as security risks. With tensions between the Soviet Union and America running extremely high, Nixon chose to capitalize on the fears the average citizen might have been entertaining about the current administration, while wordlessly assuring them that he would hold the next administration to a higher level of trust and morality.

Later in the speech, Nixon did something that he referred to that evening as “unprecedented in the history of American politics” when he outlined his entire employment history and then explained to his listeners every last bit of income or equity that he and his wife had.

First of all, we've got a house in Washington, which cost 41,000 dollars and on which we owe 20,000 dollars. We have a house in Whittier, California which cost 13,000 dollars and on which we owe 3000 dollars. My folks are living there at the present time. I have just 4000 dollars in life insurance, plus my GI policy which I've never been able to convert, and which will run out in two years. I have no life insurance whatever on Pat. I have no life insurance on our two youngsters, Tricia and Julie. I own a 1950 Oldsmobile car. We have our furniture. We have no stocks and bonds of any type. We have no interest of any kind, direct or indirect, in any business. Now, that's what we have. What do we owe?

Well in addition to the mortgage, the 20,000 dollar mortgage on the house in Washington, the 10,000 dollar one on the house in Whittier, I owe 4500 dollars to the Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C., with interest 4 and 1/2 percent. I owe 3500 dollars to my parents, and the interest on that loan, which I pay regularly, because it's the part of the savings they made through the years they were working so hard — I pay regularly 4 percent interest. And then I have a 500 dollar loan, which I have on my life insurance.

A large part of the reason for doing this had been under the advice of General Eisenhower who had told Nixon to, “tell them everything there is to tell, everything you can remember since the day you entered public life. Tell them about any money you have ever received.”³⁹ Under his current circumstances, and precarious grip on the Vice Presidential nomination he could hardly be blamed for following the advice of his running mate.

The move turned out to be much more clever and then anyone could have hoped. Many Americans, considering that the great depression was only recent past, could sympathize with having not paid off loans for their homes. Many had borrowed money from

³⁹ Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, p 98

their parents in order to make life better for their families. More still could understand and relate to not having their entire family protected by life insurance, or had borrowed money from banks. Nixon had placed himself as one of the average Americans struggling to make ends meet and to provide the very best possible lives for their families.

He then goes on to involve his wife, Pat, in the presentation. As he does so, the camera pans over to show her sitting near him as a dutiful and supportive wife. During the presentation this happened six separate times. Herbert Parmet points out in his book *Richard Nixon: An American Enigma*, Pat Nixon was as much a prop as the American flag.⁴⁰

Well, that's about it. That's what we have. And that's what we owe. It isn't very much. But Pat and I have the satisfaction that every dime that we've got is honestly ours. I should say this, that Pat doesn't have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat, and I always tell her she'd look good in anything.

The words spoke well to many Americans listening in, but they were not the first time he had used them. A few days before the speech on September 20th in Eugene, Oregon, Nixon had been greeted by signs that read “No mink coats for Nixon, just cold cash.” Nixon immediately responded, “That’s absolutely right – there are no mink coats for the Nixons. I’m proud to say my wife, Pat, wears a good Republican cloth coat.”⁴¹ The response to those words at the rally had been so positive that Nixon undoubtedly jotted them down in case someone should bring up such an attack again. Reusing the idea in the speech only made sense.

⁴⁰ Parmet, *Richard M. Nixon An American Enigma*, p 41

⁴¹ Nixon, *Six Crises*, p 88

The audience relation portion of the speech that is most remembered, of course, is that of Nixon's discussion of Checkers, the family dog.

One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don't they'll probably be saying this about me, too. We did get something, a gift, after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog. And believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore, saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was? It was a little cocker spaniel dog in a crate that he'd sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted. And our little girl Tricia, the six year old, named it "Checkers." And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep it.

These lines have become so enduring over time that this address is now referred to as Nixon's Checkers Speech instead of The Fund Speech as it was originally. After all, who could begrudge a father who would put the happiness of his children above that of the opinion the country might hold for him for having accepted such a gift. Further, Nixon delivered this speech exactly eight years after Franklin Delano Roosevelt had used his dog Fala in his speech to the Teamster's Union (September 23rd, 1944) to ridicule the charge that he had wasted taxpayers' money by sending a destroyer back to pick up the dog allegedly lost on an inspection trip to a military base in Alaska. Years after the speech Nixon was asked, "Did you have Fala in mind?" His reply, which indicates Nixon's true feelings about FDR, was, "Of course I did. I got a kind of malicious pleasure out of it. I'll needle them on this one, I said to myself."⁴² This was certainly a portion of the counterattack in Nixon's mind, but the overall message it conveyed to the audience was one of commonality with them instead of

⁴² Halford, *Oratorical Encounters*, p 109

ribbing a former President. If the old saying is correct, and dogs are truly man's best friend, then it becomes an American truism that you do not attack a person who loves their pet.

Counterattack

Knowing that it was simply not enough to merely establish his connection to the majority of the viewing audience, Nixon took a second approach during the address, and used the opportunity to launch a counteroffensive against the Democratic campaign. Through the teachings of his close associate and 1950 Campaign manager, Murray Chotiner, and his own background in debate, Nixon's instinct required him not just to defend himself but to counterattack. He knew he would have one of the largest audiences of the campaign, and he determined to take advantage of it for more than explaining the fund.⁴³ Further, it would be a chance to prove his usefulness to Eisenhower to not only the General and his staff, but to the American people at large. Indeed, the viewing audience has been reported to have been between 58 and 60 million people.⁴⁴

One of the first items that Nixon wanted to address was that he had been keeping the money a secret which he does by engaging in a mental dialogue with the viewing audience.

And now to answer those questions let me say this: Not one cent of the 18,000 dollars or any other money of that type ever went to me for my personal use. Every penny of it was used to pay for political expenses that I did not think should be charged to the taxpayers of the United States. It was not a secret fund. As a matter of fact, when I was on "Meet the Press" — some of you may have seen it last Sunday — Peter Edson came up to me after the program, and he said, "Dick, what about this "fund" we hear about?" And I said, "Well, there's no secret about it. Go out and see Dana Smith who

⁴³ Wicker, *One Of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream*, p 95

⁴⁴ Wilson, *Is Nixon Fit to be President*

was the administrator of the fund.” And I gave him [Edson] his [Smith’s] address. And I said you will find that the purpose of the fund simply was to defray political expenses that I did not feel should be charged to the Government.

Peter Edson, Washington political columnist for Newspaper Enterprise Association, confirmed this by recounting when he appeared on the television program “Meet the Press” with Nixon on September 14th. Afterward he asked the Senator about the alleged supplementary salary. “Without a moment’s hesitation, he told me that the rumor as I had it was all wrong,” Edson wrote subsequently. “But there was a story there and it would be all right for me to use it. He didn’t attempt to duck the question in any way.” The Senator suggested that Edson telephone Dana Smith in Pasadena for details, because Smith ran the fund and knew much more about it than Nixon did, himself. Edson called the next day, and Smith discussed the general background and specific aspects of the fund.⁴⁵

Continuing with this mental dialogue he went on to say:

Well, then the question arises, you say, “Well, how do you pay for these and how can you do it legally?” And there are several ways that it can be done, incidentally, and that it is done legally in the United States Senate and in the Congress. The first way is to be a rich man. I don’t happen to be a rich man, so I couldn’t use that one. Another way that is used is to put your wife on the pay roll. Let me say, incidentally, that my opponent, my opposite number for the Vice Presidency on the Democratic ticket, does have his wife on the pay roll and has had it — her on his pay roll for the ten years — for the past ten years. Now just let me say this: That’s his business, and I’m not critical of him for doing that. You will have to pass judgment on that particular point.

But I have never done that for this reason: I have found that there are so many deserving stenographers and secretaries in Washington that needed the work that I just didn’t feel it was right to put my wife on the pay roll.

⁴⁵ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 107

On Monday, September 22nd, just before Nixon's public address, the "Stevenson Fund" was revealed. An official of a mimeograph machine company doing business with the state of Illinois charged that Governor Stevenson solicited contributions from private businessmen. Stevenson immediately confirmed it, said it "has never been any secret," explained that the money supplemented the state salaries of members of his administration who left better-paying jobs in private business to serve Illinois. Stevenson insisted that none of the money went to him or any other elected official, and there was "no question of improper influence, because there was no connection between the contributors and the beneficiaries."⁴⁶

The point of the matter was not to accuse Stevenson of wrong doing; it was merely to point out that he had been doing the same as Nixon in addition to keeping his wife on the payroll as part of his staff. Additionally, the word "fund" had taken on negative connotations at this point and with Stevenson saying the word it sounded and looked sinister. It also gave Nixon the opportunity to suggest, in a manner that could hardly be misunderstood, that both Stevenson and his running mate, Sparkman, had better bare their financial souls, as he was doing. He does this directly later in the speech when he said, "I would suggest that under the circumstances both Mr. Sparkman and Mr. Stevenson should come before the American people, as I have, and make a complete financial statement as to their financial history, and if they don't it will be an admission that they have something to hide." Beyond that, he places the passage of judgment in the hands of the people watching, asking them to decide on their own how they feel about the Stevenson Fund.

⁴⁶ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 123

Again, Nixon was restating things he has said earlier in the campaign. On September 18th Nixon issued a brief statement outlining the “facts” of the fund and declared: “I might have put my wife on the federal payroll as did the Democratic nominee for vice-president.”⁴⁷ Stevenson had admitted to his own fund, but up to this point gave few details about it, declined to answer questions about it, and it had not been public or audited.⁴⁸

The issue of having and not having money was growing larger and larger as the campaigns progressed, and the Nixon Fund was a central focus point of it. Earlier in the speech Nixon had outlined his income and possessions to allow the American public to see what he was worth in the measure of monetary value. To further address that in the speech he said:

It isn't easy to come before a nationwide audience and bare your life, as I've done. But I want to say some things before I conclude that I think most of you will agree on. Mr. Mitchell, the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, made this statement — that if a man couldn't afford to be in the United States Senate, he shouldn't run for the Senate. And I just want to make my position clear. I don't agree with Mr. Mitchell when he says that only a rich man should serve his Government in the United States Senate or in the Congress. I don't believe that represents the thinking of the Democratic Party, and I know that it doesn't represent the thinking of the Republican Party.

In one of many statements issued after the fund story broke Mitchell had said, “If a fellow can't afford to be a Senator, he shouldn't seek the office.” The always politically conscious Nixon saw this as an opportunity for an attack of his own, and made certain to repeat the quote so that the country could decide the issue for themselves. After verifying the source with a former history professor, Nixon countered with the Lincoln quotation about

⁴⁷ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 110

⁴⁸ Wicker, *One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream*, p 95

God loving the “common people” and at the same time reminded his audience about Stevenson’s “inherited wealth.”⁴⁹ He went on:

I believe that it’s fine that a man like Governor Stevenson, who inherited a fortune from his father, can run for President. But I also feel that it’s essential in this country of ours that a man of modest means can also run for President, because, you know, remember Abraham Lincoln, you remember what he said: “God must have loved the common people — he made so many of them.”

Later, scholars revealed that Nixon had actually quoted Lincoln incorrectly. Lincoln actually said, after being told that he was “common-looking,” “Common-looking people are the best in the world; that is the reason the Lord makes so many of them.”⁵⁰ The idea was conveyed correctly, however, and few of his viewers were likely to be versed enough in the sayings of Abraham Lincoln to have caught on to the error.

The Final Results

Walter Fisher has suggested, in his book *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*, that for any narrative to be successful, it must have “coherence” and “fidelity.”⁵¹ By coherence he meant that the story must hold together structural, materially, and with what the audience already knows about the characters. At the same time the story must have fidelity or truthfulness. The American public found that Nixon’s life story met both of these criteria. They could identify with the mortgage payment, the parental loans, and the lack of life insurance on the wife and children,

⁴⁹ Nixon, *Six Crises*, p 103

⁵⁰ Wicker, *One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream*, p 98

⁵¹ Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*, p 47

and even the wife's cloth coat. By reputation Nixon was a political fighter and a family man, and the public admired the father who cared so much for his children that he would not give back the family dog "regardless of what they say about it.

As Henry McGuckin pointed out sixteen years later in an article published in *The Southern Speech Journal*, the values Nixon portrayed in his life story were values millions of Americans held dear, and the response from the country not only reflected that, but was more than Nixon could have expected. Former President Hoover said, "If everyone in the city of Washington possessed the high level of courage, probity, and patriotism of Senator Nixon, this would be a far better nation."⁵² George D. Aiken, Republican Senator from Vermont, said, "I know that no senator can maintain a family in Washington and stay in the Senate on his present salary unless he has some outside financial help."⁵³ A telegram from the Republican National Committee reported that 107 of its 138 members had been reached in a quick poll and all voted "enthusiastically" to keep Nixon on the ticket.⁵⁴

Eisenhower immediately responded to broadcast by calling Nixon a "warrior," and that he had never seen "courage" to surpass that shown by Nixon, and in a showdown fight he preferred "one courageous, honest man" at his side to "a whole boxcar full of pussyfooters."⁵⁵ With such an outcry of support he had no choice but to continue with Nixon as his running mate. The two went on to win the election by 7 million votes.

When reflecting on the success of his public speaking moments he had many things to say in response. In one instance he spoke about how only when he could deliver a speech extemporaneously did it have the "spark of spontaneity" he felt was "essential for a television

⁵² Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 188

⁵³ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 188

⁵⁴ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 133-134

⁵⁵ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 132

audience.”⁵⁶ Normally, Nixon would work a full week, at least, on a major speech. There was less than two days for him to prepare the most important one of his life. “I was pretty tired by that time,” he recalls, in reference to his flight to Los Angeles and the speech. “I tried to sleep, but after dozing a little while I woke up. I began to think about the broadcast, what could I say – how could I put this thing in a way people would understand. I pulled out some United Airline postcards from the souvenir packet at the seat and made notes. It was not an outline of the broadcast, but of general ideas. The way I do it whenever I write a speech. I have a general idea of the theme I am going to hit, then I just let the thoughts flow into my mind and I write them down. That was when the idea came to me to mention the girls’ dog, Checkers, the clothe coat, and Lincoln’s reference to the common people.”⁵⁷

In this instance, his spontaneity and charisma shown though. By convincing the American public of his sincerity and trustworthiness, and then turning the tables on his counterparts in the Democratic campaign, Nixon was able to sway public opinion in his favor. It was his adherence to Aristotle’s rules of good public speaking that may have saved Nixon’s political career. The choices he made in turning the attention of the attacks against his person to an attack against his opponent showed great intelligence. The decision to shared his personal finances and discuss the similarities he had with his audience gave him a sense of virtue. And he displayed goodwill by showing that he was a loving father unwilling to relinquish his family’s beloved pet. The *peripeteia* was only a matter of speaking earnestly in as much as he was able, and then redirecting the scrutiny and questions on the public onto the people who had originally accused him of wrongful intentions.

⁵⁶ Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, p 104

⁵⁷ Mazo, *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait*, p 124

Chapter 4

The Right to Vote

by Lyndon B. Johnson

If liberty and equality, as thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all person alike share in the government to the utmost.

-Aristotle

Introduction

At the time of the writing of the U.S. Constitution, the delegates and founding fathers generally shared a belief in natural law which, among other convictions, espoused that government should limit the right to vote and hold office to those with a genuine stake in the society.⁵⁸ These shared beliefs ended up giving voting rights only to White males in the newly formed United States of America. Thus, the humble beginnings of America set the stage for the Civil Rights movement to be formed and evolve over the following two hundred years.

Attempts have been made throughout history to increase voter equality with limited success. The “Reconstruction Amendments” passed after the close of the Civil War, affected greatly the rights and influence of individuals. Passed in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to all individuals born or naturalized in the United States and further

⁵⁸ Peters, *A More Perfect Union: The making of the United States Constitution*, p 35-36

protected all citizens by saying, “No state... shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”⁵⁹ The Fifteenth Amendment, passed in 1870, deals specifically with voting rights by saying that the “right of citizens of the United states to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state as a result of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Thus voting rights were give to Black, male citizens since all Blacks born in the United States were granted citizenship by the Fourteenth Amendment.⁶⁰

However, the concept of equal rights provided by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments do not intend to provide equality among individuals or races. It only provides equal application of the laws of the country. The law might have forbade states from discriminating among individuals, but it did not address the discrimination of individuals against each other. Individuals in positions of power in each state were then able to continue monitoring and controlling, to a large degree, who was able to cast their votes in elections. Though the underprivileged have always fought back in whatever capacity they were able, the 1960’s brought on a whole new level of intensity and commitment towards gaining equality.

One of the high points of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s occurred on March 15th 1965, when Lyndon B. Johnson appeared before Congress to deliver his Right to Vote speech. It was a declaration to the United States that racial inequality would not be tolerated. The speech was largely a response to a set of dreadful incidents occurring over the

⁵⁹ United States Constitution, Amendment 14

⁶⁰ United States Constitution, Amendment 15

previous ten days, including the infamous Bloody Sunday, in Selma, a small Alabama town nestled on the banks of the Alabama River.

In 1965, Dallas County, in which Selma is located, comprised 15,000 people, about half of whom were Black. Only 156 Blacks were registered to vote in the county – a number that had grown by only 14 in the previous ten years. Dr. Martin Luther King had gone to Selma two months before the demonstrations and announced that he would fight the town's voter registration policies. At the current rate of registration, he commented, "it would take about 103 years to register the adult Negroes."⁶¹ For several months Johnson had been planning legislation to finally secure voter equality in America, but the escalating issues in Selma forced him to push the bill forward more quickly than he had previously intended. Always ready to act when the situation called for decisiveness, Johnson prepared for battle.

In doing so, he had to craft a speech that would bring the nation's public and government together toward his own goals. He would have to complete a reversal of circumstances in the country, a large scale *peripeteia*. As Halford Ryan depicts in his book, U.S. Presidents as Orators, "From Johnson's idealistic framework, securing the right to register to vote would not only protect voting rights, but would also profoundly alter the course of most every cultural and social problem in America at the time."⁶² The nation's thirty-sixth President knew that the coming days and weeks could, and likely would, change the future of the United States.

This chapter will first examine the events that directly led to Johnson's speech by showing that the American public was crying out for action. Then it will closely examine

⁶¹ Lawson, *Black Ballots: Voting Rights in the South 1944-1969*, p 308

⁶² Halford, *U.S. Presidents as Orators*, p 240

how the President uses the archetypal metaphor of war both to rally the nation around him, and outline what must be done in order to win the “war” he has proposed.

A Nation in Crisis

On March 7th, 1965, a group of seven hundred marchers, protesting for equal voting rights in Alabama, left Selma only to be promptly stopped just outside of town by a row of fifty mounted State troopers. The troopers gave the group, made up mostly of African Americans, two minutes to disperse and return to their homes. Just two minutes later, after the marchers had not moved from their positions, half of the mounted troopers rushed the bulk of the crowd, brandishing clubs, whips, and ropes. After pushing the marchers back a distance of fifty yards, they began firing tear gas into the crowd and once again rode into the mass of people while a second mounted group charged from the other side giving the marchers nowhere to run.⁶³

Afterwards, the now two hundred lawmen chased the crowd back into their homes and churches with riot guns, pistols, tear gas bombs, and nightsticks. In all, fifty-seven people were injured badly enough to warrant immediate hospital attention. Seventeen of those fifty-seven were injured so severely that they required admittance to overnight care.⁶⁴

The next day, having been held up from attending the march by other untimely occurrences in Atlanta, Dr. Martin Luther King arrived in Selma to announced plans for a new march saying, “I am shocked at the terrible reign of terror that took place in Alabama

⁶³ Leon Daniel, “Troopers Rout Selma Marchers,” *The Washington Post*, March 8th, 1965, p A1

⁶⁴ Roy Reed, “Alabama Police use gas and clubs to rout Negroes,” *The New York Times*, March 8th, 1965, p 1

yesterday. Negro citizens engaged in a peaceful and orderly march to protest racial injustice were beaten, brutalized, and harassed by state troopers, and Alabama revealed its law enforcement agents have no respect for democracy and the rights of its Negro citizens,”⁶⁵ As members of various faiths and civil rights organizations began flocking to Selma to offer King their support, Alabama Governor George Wallace publicly ordered that “all necessary means” should be used to stop such processions and any other actions that might occur.⁶⁶

True to his word, and despite a recently enacted federal injunction set up to avoid further bloodshed, two days after the incident, Dr. King led a crowd, now totaling more than three thousand, to the scene of the savage attacks where state troopers once again halted the progress of the marchers. After a non-confrontational stand-off with law enforcement, King signaled his followers to peacefully return to their starting point from earlier that day.⁶⁷

Several hours after the march, three Caucasian clergymen from Boston, Reverends James Reeb, Clark B. Olsen, and Orloff W. Miller, were assaulted on the streets of Selma for having been involved in the protest earlier that day. Although both Olsen and Orloff sustained minor injuries, Reeb was not so fortunate. Listed in critical condition after being diagnosed with a skull fracture, he was taken to University Hospital in Birmingham for emergency surgery.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, all across the United States, and even some places outside the U.S., civil unrest was growing. The events in this tiny portion of the country had been having a profound effect on the nation as a whole, and they would not soon be forgotten. Protests,

⁶⁵ Associated Press, “Dr. King Announces Plan for New Talk And Assails Attack,” *The New York Times*, March 8th, 1965, p 20

⁶⁶ United Press International, “Clergymen Across U.S. Taking Part,” *The Washington Post*, March 9th, 1965, p A1

⁶⁷ Paul Good, “King Defies Court Rule, Then Yields,” *The Washington Post*, March 10th, 1965, p A1

⁶⁸ Roy Reed, “Protest Begun Despite Court – 3 Ministers Attacked Later,” *The New York Times*, March 10th, 1965, p 1

very similar to what had occurred in reaction to past wars and that would certainly be very similar in regards to future wars, began occurring in earnest. In Detroit, Michigan state Governor George Romney and Detroit mayor Jerome P. Cavanagh led thousands of people in a ten block peace march.⁶⁹ Considering how unusual it was, and still is, for major members of the government to participate in any sort of anti-war rally this takes on added meaning. Furthermore, the state of Michigan announced that it was investigating the legal feasibility of filing a suit in the United States Supreme Court to reduce Alabama's Congressional representation for having denied African-Americans the right to vote.⁷⁰

In Washington D.C., thirty government policemen were forced to physically clear one hundred seventy people from the office of Attorney General Katzenback, while seven hundred more picketed outside of the Whitehouse.⁷¹ Twenty civil rights demonstrators had to be dragged from the Federal Building in Los Angeles when they refused to cooperate with officials and leave at closing time, and one hundred more were arrested for blocking doors and driveways to keep employees from returning home for the day.⁷² In Wisconsin, a group of one hundred thirty-three students from Beloit College marched a symbolic fifty miles to the state capitol,⁷³ and New York's Fifth Avenue was assailed by eight hundred Marchers at mid-day.⁷⁴

The intersection in Chicago where State and Madison streets meet, known as the busiest corner in the world, was blocked during rush-hour by protestors,⁷⁵ while, elsewhere in Illinois, one hundred twenty-five students and five faculty members of MacMurry College in

⁶⁹ David R. Jones, "10,000 March in Detroit," *The New York Times*, March 10th, 1965, p 1

⁷⁰ David R. Jones, "Michigan May Sue," *The New York Times*, March 11th, 1965, p 21

⁷¹ Associated Press, "Demonstrators Removed," *The New York Times*, March 10th, 1965, p 23

⁷² United Press International, "20 Ousted in Los Angeles," *The New York Times*, March 10th, 1965, p 23

⁷³ Associated Press, "Beloit Students March," *The New York Times*, March 10th, 1965, p 23

⁷⁴ Theodore James, "800 New York Marchers," *The New York Times*, March 10th, 1965, p 23

⁷⁵ United Press International, "Chicago Traffic Blocked," *The New York Times*, March 10th, 1965, p 23

Jacksonville paraded around the Federal Building.⁷⁶ Eighty people marched before the Courthouse in Buffalo, New York calling for federal intervention in Selma,⁷⁷ and in Canada, the United States consulate was the stage for a sit-in demonstration by more than two hundred students from the University of Toronto and other civil rights sympathizers.⁷⁸

Different religious organizations and leaders were becoming involved as well. In Syracuse, New York more than one hundred people, including representatives of the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths, staged a prayer on the steps of the county courthouse.⁷⁹ Near the White House, a mass rally of religious leaders erupted in shouts of fury and accusation over what they regarded as President Johnson's failure to act on the racial crisis.⁸⁰

And of course, in Selma, protests continued to take place on a daily and nightly basis. In fact, one evening three hundred protestors slept in the street after police halted their third attempt of the day to march on the Dallas County Courthouse.⁸¹ Protests and confrontations were becoming so constant there at ground zero that President Johnson alerted seven hundred Federal troops to be ready for possible duty in Selma to quickly settle any violence that might erupt.⁸²

Although Johnson had been planning to address Congress the following Monday, too much had transpired over the previous days not to make a statement. On Saturday the thirteenth he held a press conference in the White House Rose Garden to announce that,

⁷⁶ Associated Press, "Protest in Illinois," *The New York Times*, March 12th, 1965, p 19

⁷⁷ Associated Press, "80 Protest in Buffalo," *The New York Times*, March 11th, 1965, p 21

⁷⁸ Associated Press, "Canadian Students Protest," *The New York Times*, March 11th, 1965, p 21

⁷⁹ Associated Press, "Interfaith Protest at Syracuse," *The New York Times*, March 12th, 1965, p 12

⁸⁰ Nan Robertson, "Clergy Irate at Response Of Johnson to Rights Plea," *The New York Times*, March 13th, 1965, p 1

⁸¹ John Herbers, "Mayor and Police Block 3 New Marches in Selma," *The New York Times*, March 11th, 1965, p 1

⁸² Tom Wicker, "Johnson Reveals Alert to Troops in Selma Crisis," *The New York Times*, March 13th, 1965, p 1

“every resource of this Government will be directed to insuring justice for all men of all races, in Alabama and everywhere in this land.” Furthermore, he stated, “Wherever there is discrimination, this law will strike down all restriction used to deny the people the right to vote.”⁸³ He added, “I should like to say that all Americans should be indignant when one American is denied the right to vote. The loss of that right to a single citizen undermines the freedom of every citizen. This is why all of us should be concerned with the efforts of our fellow Americans to register to vote in Alabama... Nothing is more fundamental [than voting] to American citizenship and to our freedom as a nation and its people. I intend to see that that right is secured for all our citizens.”⁸⁴

Shortly after the conference, Johnson asked Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach to “write the god-damnest, toughest voting rights act you can devise.”⁸⁵ Two days later, amidst the rising turmoil, Johnson delivered the Right to Vote Speech. At 9:02 p.m., the five hundred thirty-five members of the Senate and House of Representatives, and a television audience of seventy million Americans listened as the President began to speak.⁸⁶

Rallying the Troops for War

Johnson begins his address by comparing the scene at Selma to two historic battles in U.S. history by stating, “At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man’s unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox.” With Lexington and Concord being the

⁸³ Johnson, Lyndon B. “President’s New Conference in the Whitehouse Rose Garden.” March 13th, 1965

⁸⁴ Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, p 51-52

⁸⁵ Johnson, *Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency*, p 161

⁸⁶ Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, p 106

first military engagements of the American Revolutionary War, and the Battle of Appomattox Courthouse the final engagement of Confederate General Robert E. Lee's before surrendering to Union forces, Johnson cleverly used this comparison at the beginning of his speech to immediately set the stage for his metaphor of war, and placed a certain amount of historical weight to the situation at hand. The examples take an even more important role when examined carefully.

Lexington, in particular, displays an interesting parallel to Selma. It was one of the first stages of a war that led to the American Colonies gaining their independence from Great Britain. On the morning of April 19th, 1775 British regulars, on their way to Concord, entered Lexington. The local militia quickly assembled and observed them from rank formation in the town's common square. The militia's Captain, John Parker, knew they were outmatched, and ordered his men to, "Stand your ground; don't fire unless fired upon..."⁸⁷ A British officer soon commanded the militia, much like the State troopers at Selma, to lay down their arms and disperse.⁸⁸ When this did not happen violence ensued. Though no one can prove who shot the first bullet, eight Colonists were killed in the fray and the American Revolutionary War had begun. Although Selma was certainly not the first battle of the civil rights movement, it was probably, much like Lexington, the one that attracted the most national attention, and it may have been the first real battle they were truly aware of in the United States.

The additional reference to Appomattox was Johnson's way of showing that although this may be the first true battle, he intended for it to be the final battle of this war that need be fought and ultimately finished. In doing so, his speech blurred past-present time distinctions.

⁸⁷ Fisher, *Paul Revere's Ride*, p 123

⁸⁸ Fisher, *Paul Revere's Ride*, p 190-191

Within the speech current circumstances were part of the past, and past events were part of the present.⁸⁹

As stated in the introduction of his speech:

This was the first nation in the history of the world to be founded with a purpose. The great phrases of that purpose still sound in every American heart, North and South: ‘All men are created equal’—‘government by consent of the governed’—‘give me liberty or give me death.’ Well, those are not just clever words, or those are not just empty theories. In their name Americans have fought and died for two centuries, and tonight around the world they stand there as guardians of our liberty, risking their lives.

Again, Johnson is making use of well known images of American freedom; only instead of battles he uses quotes from the Revolutionary War. It was this war that Americans recognize as being the conflict in history that freed the nation from an oppressive king, and Johnson almost certainly added the quotes to draw this direct comparison between the two situations.

This appears even more transparent when it is considered that he could have used popular slogans or quotes from the previous more recent wars and conflicts America had been involved in. Many of the people in his audience would certainly have been aware of and recognized any number of sayings from the eras surrounding World War II, but this was not the association Johnson was looking for. The Second World War pitted America, along with a number of other nations, against a hostile foreign threat. Instead, by using the Revolutionary War references, Johnson drew similarities to a war where Americans fought an unjust ruler in their own homeland in an attempt to secure freedom for all of its various citizens.

⁸⁹ Pauley, *The Modern Presidency & Civil Rights*, p 184

He even ended the phrase by referencing time. “For two centuries,” was the exact phrase used. This time length spans the entire history of America as a free nation, giving further meaning to the rest of his speech with the weight of history now added to the problems facing civil rights. Instead of just passing this off as simply another issue for Congress to debate, he has linked this conflict to the nation’s endless fight for freedom and inalienable rights. As Garth Pauley states in, The Modern Presidency & Civil Rights, “To experience Johnson’s speech is to be instructed to experience events in American history – including the immediate situation following Selma – as part of a transcendent reality.”⁹⁰ He even outright said, “Our mission is at once the oldest and the most basic of this country: to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man.” These are the same types of ideals that the Revolutionary war was fought for.

He finishes his introduction with:

To apply any other test—to deny a man his hopes because of his color or race, his religion or the place of his birth—is not only to do injustice, it is to deny America and to dishonor the dead who gave their lives for American freedom.

This was Johnson’s final appeal to the universal ideals of Americans. The last portion of the phrase served to give homage to those that paid the ultimate price for freedom, and sought to show that should the equal rights bill Johnson was about to introduce not be approved that it would be a disgrace to the heroic fallen soldiers of the country. To any veterans, or to those listening who had lost a friend or loved one in any of the recent conflicts and wars, or even to those who simply called themselves patriotic, this line would be particularly powerful, and to

⁹⁰ Pauley, *The Modern Presidency & Civil Rights*, p 183

ignore Johnson's request would insult those who had fought for the freedoms the country so cherished.

Having framed the Civil Rights movement as a war aiming to return America to its founding principles, Johnson moved on to explain why the country should endorse this war, and what his desired outcomes were. Johnson's instinct on confronting a problem was to manipulate the men who held the levers of power toward the answer that most people want, the consensus, or an overall agreement.⁹¹ Yet, in the Right to Vote speech he made his appeals not just to Capitol Hill, but to the American people as a whole. Thus, he began this section slightly more subtly, yet there can be little doubt as to his motivation. After connecting the situation to conflicts of the past, Johnson starts by giving familiar excuses for going to war such as, "There is no reason which can excuse the denial of that right." The denial of rights, of course, was one of the primary reasons for the Revolutionary War. What better way show why the country should be involved in this metaphorical war then to appeal to that basic call of freedom, the restoration of personal rights.

Later in the speech Johnson identified his own, and thus the nation's highest authority, "The command of the Constitution is plain." The mention of the document, that binds the nation, as yet a higher general in the field was no mistake, and he followed its evocation, as any subordinate to a higher office would, by mentioning dire consequences for the nation as a whole when he stated, "It is wrong—deadly wrong—to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country." It isn't merely wrong, but deadly wrong to disobey the Constitution's command as well. The parallels between a general and his or her troops is interesting, and Johnson wanted to make the point that just as troops in the

⁹¹ Kraft, *Profiles in Power*, p 13

military may face great peril for not following orders so too might the people of America face danger for working against the writings held within the Constitution.

Johnson was probably aware that the previously spoken words and lines alone would not be enough to rally the entire country to his fight, so he continued pressing with, “We cannot, we must not, refuse to protect the right of every American to vote in every election that he may desire to participate in.” This statement is the sort of statement that gives the listener the feeling that if they are not with the speaker, then they are against that speaker. “Every American” is a broad inclusive statement, especially considering that the voting act which Johnson wished to enact was for protecting a specific ethnic group within America. However, tailoring the speech to specifically protect African-Americans might have given many Americans the idea that they need not champion the President’s cause.

To further the idea that abstaining from the fight would put one at odds against the President and his followers, Johnson said the following, “I recognize that outside this chamber is the outraged conscience of a nation, the grave concern of many nations, and the harsh judgment of history on our acts.” Much like during wartime, this implies that if action is not taken, the world over, and history itself, will look upon the listeners as the greater evil in this struggle. Certainly, few amongst the American public would desire to be viewed in such an unfavorable light.

Throughout the speech Johnson continually called for the American public to join in his “war” against voter inequality. He knew that doing so only in the beginning or ending of his address would hardly suffice to sway his listeners, so when the speech is examined closely we can plainly see attempt after attempt made to rally his troops. Repeated attempts, however, are not merely enough to encourage a nation to go to war, to fulfill the standards of

a *peripeteia*, and Johnson was well aware of that. In addition to mustering support, a General must instill hope that victory can be attained, and explain how that victory can be won.

How to Win the War

To truly entice his audience to do battle along with him in order to successfully complete a *peripeteia*, Johnson had to encourage the American people towards a familiar outcome. The start of which can be seen here:

In such a case our duty must be clear to all of us. The Constitution says that no person shall be kept from voting because of his race or his color. We have all sworn an oath before God to support and to defend that Constitution. We must now act in obedience to that oath.

This passage subtly showed the country what must be done. The “We have all sworn an oath” did not just apply to the President and Congress, but to all Americans. As Dorris Kearns points out in Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream, “Johnson’s ideal was an America in which every American shared in the progress and responsibilities of the nation.”⁹² He further punctuated his point with that familiar call to battle saying that action must be taken immediately to uphold the values that America has sworn to protect. In foreign wars it would be soldiers working to protect these values, but Johnson pictured this war on the doorstep of all Americans, and envisioned all Americans stepping up to help draw it to a successful conclusion.

It did not take long for him to abandon this subtlety though, and Johnson quickly demonstrated how direct and to the point he could truly be when he outlined exactly what he expected his proposed war to yield:

⁹² Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, p 215

This bill will strike down restrictions to voting in all elections—Federal, State, and local—which have been used to deny Negroes the right to vote.

This bill will establish a simple, uniform standard which cannot be used, however ingenious the effort, to flout our Constitution.

It will provide for citizens to be registered by officials of the United States Government if the State officials refuse to register them.

It will eliminate tedious, unnecessary lawsuits which delay the right to vote.

Finally, this legislation will ensure that properly registered individuals are not prohibited from voting.

Like a general outlining a plan of attack, Johnson evoked his Commander in Chief status to the utmost of its power. He immediately used the harsh militaristic phrase “strike down” to emphasis what was intended to happen. Such a proclamation has surely been uttered in familiar tones by past leaders of America when reasoning before Congress on why the country should go to war. Indeed, it is fairly similar to the approach he took when outlining his plan in his War On Poverty speech a year earlier. In that speech, just after out and out declaring war on poverty, Johnson outlined thirteen goals for Congress and the American people to achieve.

Similarly, a singular word tied each declaration to one another. In the Right to Vote Speech it is the word *will*, while in the War On Poverty speech it is the word *must*. Certainly the words are taken in their context, but carry much the same meaning in each speech. They were words meant to direct the audience towards the goals of the administration.

Earlier in the speech Johnson had already issued his ultimatums to the “enemy”:

Open your polling places to all your people.

Allow men and women to register and vote whatever the color of their skin.

Extend the rights of citizenship to every citizen of this land.

As shown earlier in this chapter, the office of Commander in Chief served Johnson well. The leader of an armed force can issue such decrees, and with the nation, as his perceived armed force, watching he assumed that mantle. This idea of issuing terms of surrender carries an implied threat. However, Johnson abstains from revealing any consequences. Instead, he ended that portion of the speech, likely confident in his momentum, and moved on to begin rallying the people of country together.

It is not until later in the speech that Johnson actually addresses the oppressed victims that spurred the beginning of his battle, the African-American people. Never one to do anything half hearted, Johnson brought the oppressed into the fold with a phrase that extracts multiple meanings when he convincingly said, “And we shall overcome.” Words such as this have been spoken throughout time by hundreds, if not thousands, of commanders on the battle field or otherwise attempting to rally their troops to victory. They carry the implication of an enemy that deserves justice and a battle that can be won should the proper commitment be applied to it from its combatants and supporters. At this time in 1965 the need for support had never been greater.

Just as important, this phrase also served Johnson’s other goal of rallying the troops as it was the standard of the African-American of the day. This was the near Biblical prophetic slogan the civil rights movement was repeating everywhere they appeared, and every oppressed person in the country knew it. Not only did the statement serve to further rally the average American towards Johnson’s goal, but it also served to show the African-

American populace of the country that their voice is being recognized. The extra line of inclusion helped Johnson to insure that it was not just White America fighting against an enemy of their constitution, but all of America fighting a common enemy.

After this powerful statement Johnson moved onto the final portion of his speech where he, once again imitated like the general he portrayed, and informed the people what kind of commitment it will take to win this war. He stated:

But a century has passed, more than a hundred years, since the Negro was freed. And he is not fully free tonight.

It was more than a hundred years ago that Abraham Lincoln, a great President of another party, signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but emancipation is a proclamation and not a fact.

A century has passed, more than a hundred years, since equality was promised. And yet the Negro is not equal.

A century has passed since the day of promise. And the promise is unkept.

Johnson was explaining to the people that this fight has been fought before. In fact, as he points out, it was fought by one of the nation's most remember and revered former presidents, Abraham Lincoln. Again, Johnson has phrased his speech to carry multiple meanings. The mention of Lincoln can be no accident, and reason was simple as Johnson, ever the shrewd politician, sought to favorably parallel himself to another well known president and champion of civil rights.

The other key idea to draw from this section of the speech is the reference to time. In four consecutive sentences Johnson referenced the century or hundred year mark. This in itself carries a double meaning. First, it showed that, despite the effort of a great president, the country has been suffering at the hands of an enemy for a long period of time, and that

the moment to correct this wronging was at hand. Second, it showed that the proposed war may not be over in an instant, and it might in fact take a great deal of time to be properly won. In this way, Johnson had set himself up to be a hero of a similar caliber as Lincoln should he succeed, but also gave himself a scapegoat should he fail to make the necessary changes in due time.

To push this notion of commitment a step further he went on to say, “There have been many pressures upon your President and there will be others as the days come and go. But I pledge you tonight that we intend to fight this battle where it should be fought: in the courts, and in the Congress, and in the hearts of men.” Which is, once again, very similar to a phrase in his War Against Poverty speech that attempts to do the same thing which was as follows, “For the war against poverty will not be won here in Washington. It must be won in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White House.” Here he was truly charging the American people with the responsibility for this fight, and setting them up for a battle that could end up lasting a long time. Subtly though, he may have been sending a message to protestors around the nation. The fight, he said, should be fought in the courts and in Congress, not on the streets of the nation.

It may be that the phrasing from the two speeches is merely coincidence, but history has showed us that Lyndon Baines Johnson was rarely a man of coincidence. Ever the master of his surroundings and actions, Johnson must have assuredly repeated the phrase on purpose. The reason was to aim at the one audience that might have specifically recognized its significance, the congressional audience. Once again, several meanings can be derived from this. First of all, Johnson could have been asking them to buckle in for a long and bumpy road, as the War On Poverty had yet to be won over the last year since it was

proposed. Secondly, he could have been chastising them for not yet winning the last war he proposed to them.

Political maneuvering finished, Johnson returned to settling the American people in for a fight. “In Selma as elsewhere we seek and pray for peace. We seek order. We seek unity. But we will not accept the peace of stifled rights, or the order imposed by fear, or the unity that stifles protest. For peace cannot be purchased at the cost of liberty.” Again, he issued a statement that allowed him to be glorified should the war be won in the immediate time frame, yet still be free from blame should little come of these actions in his duration as President. Who could, after all, place fault upon Johnson for upholding liberty instead of enforcing proper civil rights despite the fact that he had earlier linked the two together as one and the same.

He finished the speech with call to a higher power, “God will not favor everything that we do. It is rather our duty to divine His will. But I cannot help believing that He truly understands and that He really favors the undertaking that we begin here tonight.” It is interesting to note that Johnson began the call by absolving God of responsibility, and placing it in the hands of men. This, like many persuasive speeches through the history of the world is Johnson’s final call to action. It was a way of telling the American people that while it is good to have faith that justice will be done, it is still necessary to act and insure that said justice will come to fruition. Yet he finishes the phrase by assuming God’s favor in his last push to rally the country to this noble cause.

Conclusion

There are three easily traceable reasons for why Johnson believed that the war metaphor was the best way to approach the situation at Selma. The first of these is Johnson's personal background. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, Johnson, then a member of congress, voluntarily joined the active military as an officer in the Navy.⁹³ During that time he, despite his requests to the contrary, saw limited combat and never came under fire. Regardless of not being involved to the degree he desired, this experience still gave LBJ the blanket description of military personnel. As such, he was familiar with the terminology, and when under familiar circumstances of duress it only made sense that he would fall back into those war time patterns.

Further, wars are generally waged to change circumstances dramatically. Adapting the war metaphor allowed Johnson to strike out at the perceived enemies of democracy and push for a *peripeteia*. Pushed by outrage at the events in Selma, Congress helped complete this *peripeteia* when it passed the Voting Rights Act in the summer of 1965. The House passed the bill by a vote of 378 to 74, and the Senate by 79-18. Johnson, who signed the bill into law on August 6th, 1965, would later claim that the signing of the act was his greatest accomplishment.⁹⁴ Three days after the bill had passed, the Attorney General sent examiners to Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana to begin registering voters. Within 19 days, 27,385 African-Americans had registered.⁹⁵

Secondly, the nation itself had recently seen several years of off and on conflicts and wars. From 1941 to 1945 the nation was embroiled in World War II, and a large number of his audience twenty years later would consist of people who were familiar with that type of

⁹³ Hove, *American Warriors: Five Presidents in the Pacific Theater of World War II*

⁹⁴ Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, p 132

⁹⁵ Grofman, *Controversies in Minority Voting*, p 21

rhetoric. Additionally, the Korean Conflict had occurred fifteen years before, the Cold War was escalating, and the Bay of Pigs had happened only 4 years prior. More immediately, the Vietnam Conflict had begun in 1962, and although America had yet to fully enter the fray they had still be exposed to it through the attack on the USS *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin, the Vietcong attacking an American base in Bienhoa, and a bombing of an officer's billet in Saigon. Certainly, the nation had been exposed its share of war rhetoric through these experiences.

Finally, the situation in Selma, Alabama was sparking a nation wide conflict. People across the nation were protesting in several various ways in their own versions of the war against racial injustice. Though most all the protests were peaceful, the metaphorical terms of battle were heard near everywhere.

Although the choice of language might seem casual, Johnson maintained in his memoirs that it was deliberate. He wrote, "The military image carried with it connotations of victories and defeats that could prove misleading. But I wanted to rally the nation, to sound a call to arms which would stir people in the government, in private industry, and on the campuses to lend their talents to a massive effort to eliminate the evil."⁹⁶ Furthermore, scholar Edwin Black argues that the speech was "the strongest public discourse of Johnson's presidency," and that the address effectively "recapitulated argumentative frictions that have scarred the history of debate on civil rights in the United States."⁹⁷

Once again, the ideas of Aristotle hold sway. Johnson exercised intelligence in the way he addressed the situation, inferring that it was not just an isolated problem, but a

⁹⁶ Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty*, p 21

⁹⁷ Pauley, "Rhetoric and Timeliness: An analysis of Lyndon B. Johnson's Voting Rights Address." *Western Journal of Communications* 62 (1998): 26-53.

nationwide issue that needed immediate action. He convinced his audience of his virtue by addressing the plight of a large portion of the American people. And he proved his intentions of goodwill by convincing a nation of people that the actions he proposed were for the better good of the country as a whole. In the end, a large scale *peripeteia* had been achieved.

Johnson's voting act was passed quickly and with great approval. The master tactician had reversed circumstances for an entire nation in the hopes of building a better future for all.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Communication scholar Thomas Farrell observes that, in regard to rhetoric, prudence in the world of public affairs involves enacting practical wisdom (*phronesis*) through the timely choice (*kairos*) of collaborative arguments.⁹⁸ When that is considered, all three of the examined speeches show a great deal of prudence. Bush justified her life choices before a skeptical audience with sound logic and newly established *ethos*. Much of the rhetorical force of Johnson's voting rights address came from inviting his listeners to exercise their own good judgment at a moment he rhetorically constitutes as the right time. And Nixon had to do both what Bush needed to do in regards to establishing credibility, and the invitation of judgment that helped define Johnson's speech.

It was in reaching out to their audiences in these ways that these three speakers were able to complete their individual acts of *peripity*. Plato's Phaedrus asserts that the function of speech is "to influence the soul," and without their whole-hearted attempts to influence through their language they all would certainly have failed. Plato went on to say, "The arguer 'must arrange and organize his speech accordingly, addressing a simple speech to a simple soul, but to those which are more complex something of greater complexity which embraces the whole range of tones.'" To Plato, truth was the only reality in life. Truth existed, he thought, as an idea in the minds of gods; thus truth partook of the divine. While it will not be argued in this final examination that these speakers were divine, the claim that

⁹⁸ Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture*, p 326

speaking the truth, in as much as they believed they were, helped to complete each separate *peripeteia* is easily seen throughout the past three chapters.

In his essay entitled, “The Phaedrus and the Nature of Rhetoric,” Richard Weaver notes “there are but three ways for language to affect us. It can move us toward what is good; it can move us toward what is evil; or it can in hypothetical third place, fail to move us at all.” When the audience remains unmoved, then the speaker has utterly failed at completing any sort of *peripeteia*. If the audience is moved towards evil, however, then Aristotle’s original thoughts on *peripeteias* leading the audience toward tragedy has been a realized for a certain type of speaker. Finally, if the audience is moved toward the good then the more modern applications of a *peripeteia* have been accomplished.

The Greeks conceived of the perfect speaker as one who possessed character, intelligence, and good will. A speaker’s integrity and character was judged on the basis of the apparent truthfulness of the statements they made. The audience judged the soundness and intelligence of his or her ideas in terms of their own experience and the evidence presented in support of a proposal. The speaker’s attitude and good will toward their audience was judged in terms of the audience’s best interests. For Plato, in particular, arguing must always proceed from knowledge and toward truth. He recognized that opposing views are always possible. In his *Phaedrus* he extends the idea of opposing views from law and politics to ordinary speech. But he emphasizes that it is necessary to work through opposing positions in pursuit of truth.⁹⁹

In the end, it was in this manner of working through opposing positions that the *peripeteia* in each case presented was accomplished. Barbara Bush took the time in her

⁹⁹ Leith and Myerson, *The Power of Address; Explorations in Rhetoric*, p 99

speech to address those who opposed her very presence at the event, and showed that her own path through life was just as honorable as her audience's. Her strong emphasis on developing *ethos* and the justification of her life's choices, supplemented by humor, are indications that a reversal of fortune can become an individual event for the eyes of a small audience.

Richard Nixon went from addressing the opposition that had been brought against him to turning it back upon those who had visited those claims against him. He spoke with conviction and laid his life before his audience giving them the opportunity to decide his fate. While he might argue that his listeners were responsible for his *peripeteia*, it was his careful attention to addressing the opposition through personal revelation and counter-attack that led to his dramatic reversal of fate.

Lyndon Johnson had the unenviable task of speaking to an audience that had known segregation and inequality their entire lives, and yet was able to show that the principles of the United States dictated that the country act to overcome those attitudes. His push to rally a nation toward a common goal was successful due to his embracing of a powerful metaphor and numerous mentions of the highest power in country, the U.S. Constitution. His speech helped show that the words of one person can help create a reversal of circumstances for an entire nation of people.

What remain to be discussed are the implications of this type of approach for speakers in the present and future. Certainly in the past the general public has responded well to speakers using intelligence, virtue, and goodwill to complete *peripeteias*, but whether or not we learn from history is another question entirely. We need only look at the recent two presidential terms of George W. Bush to see both sides of the *peripeteia* spectrum.

When the September 11th attacks occurred against America, the public was frightened and looking for guidance. Bush delivered that guidance through speech and example that embodied Aristotle's requirements of intelligence, virtue, and goodwill. His approval ratings skyrocketed to levels that had never been seen before as he helped the country complete a more modern sense of the *peripeteia* by helping to alleviate those fears and give the country a path on which to move forward.

Soon after, however, Aristotle's original definition of a *peripeteia* came to pass. The country began to question the information the President had given them which undermined the level of confidence some segments of the population had in him. Worse, they began to doubt his motives for engaging in response to those attacks which hurt the public perceptions of his virtue and goodwill that had previously been rated highly. Soon, his approval ratings went from record highs to record lows. Though the full story of the Bush presidency has yet to be written, it is not likely to be praised for its skill in deploying a positive *peripeteia*.

This thesis has shown the methods that three individuals used to create a *peripeteia* in three different situations. These are but tips of the metaphoric iceberg when the entire list of possible methods to bring about change is considered. This list becomes even more daunting when Aristotle's original thought on the *peripeteia* are considered, and it is known that both beneficial results and tragic results can be accomplished through speech. Considering his take on *ethos* and his emphasis on good speakers using ethical dialogue, it is hard to believe that Aristotle would not have been pleased with the more modern interpretations of *peripeteia*. He, like the listeners of each of the analyzed speeches in this thesis, would have celebrated the victories of Bush, Nixon, and Johnson in their successful reversals.

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Appendix of Speeches

Wellesley College Address

-Barbara Bush

Thank you President Keohane, Mrs. Gorbachev, Trustees, faculty, parents, Julie Porter, Christine Bicknell and the Class of 1990. I am thrilled to be with you today, and very excited, as I know you must all be, that Mrs. Gorbachev could join us.

More than ten years ago when I was invited here to talk about our experiences in the people's republic of china, I was struck by both the natural beauty of your campus . . . and the spirit of this place.

Wellesley, you see, is not just a place . . . but an idea . . . an experiment in excellence in which diversity is not just tolerated, but is embraced.

The essence of this spirit was captured in a moving speech about tolerance given last year by the student body President of one of your sister colleges. She related the story by Robert Fulghum about a young pastor who, finding himself in charge of some very energetic children, hit upon a game called "Giants, Wizards and Dwarfs." "You have to decide now," the pastor instructed the children, "which you are . . . a giant, a wizard or a dwarf?" At that, a small girl tugging on his pants leg, asked, "But where do the mermaids stand?."

The pastor told her there are no mermaids. "Oh yes there are," she said. "I am a mermaid."

This little girl knew what she was and she was not about to give up on either her identity or the game. She intended to take place wherever mermaids fit into the scheme of things. Where do the mermaids stand . . . all those who are different, those who do not fit the boxes and the pigeonholes? "Answer that question," wrote Fulghum, "and you can build a school, a nation, or a whole world on it."

As that very wise young woman said . . . "diversity . . . like anything worth having . . . requires effort." Effort to learn about and respect difference, to be compassionate with one another, to cherish our own identity . . . and to accept unconditionally the same in all others.

You should all be very proud that this is the Wellesley spirit. Now I know your first choice for today was Alice Walker, known for The Color Purple. Instead you got me - known for . . . the color of my hair! Of course, Alice Walker's book has a special resonance here. At Wellesley, each class is known by a special color . . . and for four years the Class of '90 has

worn the color purple. Today you meet on Severance Green to say goodbye to all that . . . to begin a new and very personal journey . . . a search for your own true colors.

In the world that awaits you beyond the shores of Lake Waban, no one can say what your true colors will be. But this I know: You have a first class education from a first class school. And so you need not, probably cannot, live a "paint-by numbers" life. Decisions are not irrevocable. Choices do come back. As you set off from Wellesley, I hope that many of you will consider making three very special choices.

The first is to believe in something larger than yourself . . . to get involved in some of the big ideas of your time. I chose literacy because I honestly believe that if more people could read, write and comprehend, we would be that much closer to solving so many of the problems plaguing our society.

Early on I made another choice which I hope you will make as well. Whether you are talking about education, career or service, you are talking about life . . . and life must have joy. It's supposed to be fun.

One of the reasons I made the most important decision of my life . . . to marry George Bush . . . is because he made me laugh. It's true, sometimes we've laughed through our tears . . . but that shared laughter has been one of our strongest bonds. Find the joy in life, because as Ferris Bueller said on his day off . . . "Life moves pretty fast. Ya don't stop and look around once in a while, ya gonna miss it!"

The third choice that must not be missed is to cherish your human connections: your relationships with friends and family. For several years, you've had impressed upon you the importance to your career of dedication and hard work. This is true, but as important as your obligations as a doctor, lawyer or business leader will be, you are a human being first and those human connections -- with spouses, with children, with friends -- are the most important investments you will ever make.

At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a husband, a friend, a child or a parent.

We are in a transitional period right now . . . fascinating and exhilarating times . . . learning to adjust to the changes and the choices we . . . men and women . . . are facing. I remember what a friend said, on hearing her husband lament to his buddies that he had to babysit. Quickly setting him straight my friend told her husband that when it's your own kids it's not called babysitting!"

Maybe we should adjust faster, maybe slower, but whatever the era . . . whatever the times, one thing will never change: fathers and mothers, if you have children they must come first. Your success as a family . . . our success as a society depends not on what happens at the White House, but on what happens inside your house.

For over 50 years, it was said that the winner of Wellesley's Annual Hoop Race would be the first to get married. Now they say the winner will be the first to become a C.E.O. Both of these stereotypes show too little tolerance for those who want to know where mermaids stand. So I offer you today a new legend: the winner of the Hoop Race will be the first to realize her dream . . . not society's dream . . . her own personal dream. And who knows? Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the President's spouse. I wish him well!

The controversy ends here. But our conversation is only beginning. And a worthwhile conversation it is. So as you leave Wellesley today, take with you deep thanks for the courtesy and honor you have shared with Mrs. Gorbachev and me. Thank you. God bless you. And may your future be worthy of your dreams.

Checkers Speech

-Richard Nixon

My Fellow Americans,

I come before you tonight as a candidate for the Vice Presidency and as a man whose honesty and integrity has been questioned.

Now, the usual political thing to do when charges are made against you is to either ignore them or to deny them without giving details. I believe we've had enough of that in the United States, particularly with the present Administration in Washington, D.C. To me the office of the Vice Presidency of the United States is a great office, and I feel that the people have got to have confidence in the integrity of the men who run for that office and who might obtain it.

I have a theory, too, that the best and only answer to a smear or to an honest misunderstanding of the facts is to tell the truth. And that's why I'm here tonight. I want to tell you my side of the case. I'm sure that you have read the charge, and you've heard it, that I, Senator Nixon, took 18,000 dollars from a group of my supporters.

Now, was that wrong? And let me say that it was wrong. I'm saying, incidentally, that it was wrong, not just illegal, because it isn't a question of whether it was legal or illegal, that isn't enough. The question is, was it morally wrong? I say that it was morally wrong -- if any of that 18,000 dollars went to Senator Nixon, for my personal use. I say that it was morally wrong if it was secretly given and secretly handled. And I say that it was morally wrong if any of the contributors got special favors for the contributions that they made.

And now to answer those questions let me say this: Not one cent of the 18,000 dollars or any other money of that type ever went to me for my personal use. Every penny of it was used to pay for political expenses that I did not think should be charged to the taxpayers of the United States. It was not a secret fund. As a matter of fact, when I was on "Meet the Press" -- some of you may have seen it last Sunday -- Peter Edson came up to me after the program, and he said, "Dick, what about this "fund" we hear about?" And I said, "Well, there's no secret about it. Go out and see Dana Smith who was the administrator of the fund." And I gave him [Edson] his [Smith's] address. And I said you will find that the purpose of the fund simply was to defray political expenses that I did not feel should be charged to the Government.

And third, let me point out -- and I want to make this particularly clear -- that no contributor to this fund, no contributor to any of my campaigns, has ever received any consideration that he would not have received as an ordinary constituent. I just don't believe in that, and I can say that never, while I have been in the Senate of the United States, as far as the people that

contributed to this fund are concerned, have I made a telephone call for them to an agency, or have I gone down to an agency in their behalf. And the records will show that, the records which are in the hands of the administration.

Well, then, some of you will say, and rightly, "Well, what did you use the fund for, Senator?" "Why did you have to have it?" Let me tell you in just a word how a Senate office operates. First of all, a Senator gets 15,000 dollars a year in salary. He gets enough money to pay for one trip a year -- a round trip, that is -- for himself and his family between his home and Washington, D.C. And then he gets an allowance to handle the people that work in his office to handle his mail. And the allowance for my State of California is enough to hire 13 people. And let me say, incidentally, that that allowance is not paid to the Senator. It's paid directly to the individuals that the Senator puts on his pay roll. But all of these people and all of these allowances are for strictly official business; business, for example, when a constituent writes in and wants you to go down to the Veteran's Administration and get some information about his GI policy -- items of that type, for example. But there are other expenses which are not covered by the Government. And I think I can best discuss those expenses by asking you some questions.

Do you think that when I or any other Senator makes a political speech, has it printed, should charge the printing of that speech and the mailing of that speech to the taxpayers? Do you think, for example, when I or any other Senator makes a trip to his home State to make a purely political speech that the cost of that trip should be charged to the taxpayers? Do you think when a Senator makes political broadcasts or political television broadcasts, radio or television, that the expense of those broadcasts should be charged to the taxpayers? Well I know what your answer is. It's the same answer that audiences give me whenever I discuss this particular problem: The answer is no. The taxpayers shouldn't be required to finance items which are not official business but which are primarily political business.

Well, then the question arises, you say, "Well, how do you pay for these and how can you do it legally?" And there are several ways that it can be done, incidentally, and that it is done legally in the United States Senate and in the Congress. The first way is to be a rich man. I don't happen to be a rich man, so I couldn't use that one. Another way that is used is to put your wife on the pay roll. Let me say, incidentally, that my opponent, my opposite number for the Vice Presidency on the Democratic ticket, does have his wife on the pay roll and has had it -- her on his pay roll for the ten years -- for the past ten years. Now just let me say this: That's his business, and I'm not critical of him for doing that. You will have to pass judgment on that particular point.

But I have never done that for this reason: I have found that there are so many deserving stenographers and secretaries in Washington that needed the work that I just didn't feel it was right to put my wife on the pay roll.

My wife's sitting over here. She's a wonderful stenographer. She used to teach stenography and she used to teach shorthand in high school. That was when I met her. And I can tell you folks that she's worked many hours at night and many hours on Saturdays and Sundays in my

office, and she's done a fine job, and I am proud to say tonight that in the six years I've been in the House and the Senate of the United States, Pat Nixon has never been on the Government pay roll.

What are other ways that these finances can be taken care of? Some who are lawyers, and I happen to be a lawyer, continue to practice law, but I haven't been able to do that. I'm so far away from California that I've been so busy with my senatorial work that I have not engaged in any legal practice. And, also, as far as law practice is concerned, it seemed to me that the relationship between an attorney and the client was so personal that you couldn't possibly represent a man as an attorney and then have an unbiased view when he presented his case to you in the event that he had one before Government.

And so I felt that the best way to handle these necessary political expenses of getting my message to the American people and the speeches I made -- the speeches that I had printed for the most part concerned this one message of exposing this Administration, the Communism in it, the corruption in it -- the only way that I could do that was to accept the aid which people in my home State of California, who contributed to my campaign and who continued to make these contributions after I was elected, were glad to make.

And let me say I'm proud of the fact that not one of them has ever asked me for a special favor. I'm proud of the fact that not one of them has ever asked me to vote on a bill other than of my own conscience would dictate. And I am proud of the fact that the taxpayers, by subterfuge or otherwise, have never paid one dime for expenses which I thought were political and shouldn't be charged to the taxpayers.

Let me say, incidentally, that some of you may say, "Well, that's all right, Senator, that's your explanation, but have you got any proof?" And I'd like to tell you this evening that just an hour ago we received an independent audit of this entire fund. I suggested to Governor Sherman Adams, who is the Chief of Staff of the Dwight Eisenhower campaign, that an independent audit and legal report be obtained, and I have that audit here in my hands. It's an audit made by the Price Waterhouse & Company firm, and the legal opinion by Gibson, Dunn, & Crutcher, lawyers in Los Angeles, the biggest law firm, and incidentally, one of the best ones in Los Angeles.

I am proud to be able to report to you tonight that this audit and this legal opinion is being forwarded to General Eisenhower. And I'd like to read to you the opinion that was prepared by Gibson, Dunn, & Crutcher, and based on all the pertinent laws and statutes, together with the audit report prepared by the certified public accountants. Quote:

It is our conclusion that Senator Nixon did not obtain any financial gain from the collection and disbursement of the fund by Dana Smith; that Senator Nixon did not violate any federal or state law by reason of the operation of the fund; and that neither the portion of the fund paid by Dana Smith directly to third persons, nor the portion paid to Senator Nixon, to reimburse him for designated office expenses, constituted income to the Senator which was either reportable or taxable as income under applicable tax laws.

(signed)

Gibson, Dunn, & Crutcher,

by Elmo H. Conley

Now that, my friends, is not Nixon speaking, but that's an independent audit which was requested, because I want the American people to know all the facts, and I am not afraid of having independent people go in and check the facts, and that is exactly what they did. But then I realized that there are still some who may say, and rightfully so -- and let me say that I recognize that some will continue to smear regardless of what the truth may be -- but that there has been, understandably, some honest misunderstanding on this matter, and there are some that will say, "Well, maybe you were able, Senator, to fake this thing. How can we believe what you say? After all, is there a possibility that maybe you got some sums in cash? Is there a possibility that you may have feathered your own nest?" And so now, what I am going to do -- and incidentally this is unprecedented in the history of American politics -- I am going at this time to give to this television and radio audio -- audience, a complete financial history, everything I've earned, everything I've spent, everything I own. And I want you to know the facts.

I'll have to start early. I was born in 1913. Our family was one of modest circumstances, and most of my early life was spent in a store out in East Whittier. It was a grocery store, one of those family enterprises. The only reason we were able to make it go was because my mother and dad had five boys, and we all worked in the store. I worked my way through college, and, to a great extent, through law school. And then in 1940, probably the best thing that ever happened to me happened. I married Pat who's sitting over here. We had a rather difficult time after we were married, like so many of the young couples who may be listening to us. I practiced law. She continued to teach school.

Then, in 1942, I went into the service. Let me say that my service record was not a particularly unusual one. I went to the South Pacific. I guess I'm entitled to a couple of battle stars. I got a couple of letters of commendation. But I was just there when the bombs were falling. And then I returned -- returned to the United States, and in 1946, I ran for the Congress. When we came out of the war -- Pat and I -- Pat during the war had worked as a stenographer, and in a bank, and as an economist for a Government agency -- and when we came out, the total of our savings, from both my law practice, her teaching and all the time that I was in the war, the total for that entire period was just a little less than 10,000 dollars. Every cent of that, incidentally, was in Government bonds. Well that's where we start, when I go into politics.

Now, what have I earned since I went into politics? Well, here it is. I've jotted it down. Let me read the notes. First of all, I've had my salary as a Congressman and as a Senator. Second, I have received a total in this past six years of 1600 dollars from estates which were in my law firm at the time that I severed my connection with it. And, incidentally, as I said before, I have not engaged in any legal practice and have not accepted any fees from business that

came into the firm after I went into politics. I have made an average of approximately 1500 dollars a year from nonpolitical speaking engagements and lectures.

And then, fortunately, we've inherited a little money. Pat sold her interest in her father's estate for 3,000 dollars, and I inherited 1500 dollars from my grandfather. We lived rather modestly. For four years we lived in an apartment in Parkfairfax, in Alexandria, Virginia. The rent was 80 dollars a month. And we saved for the time that we could buy a house. Now, that was what we took in. What did we do with this money? What do we have today to show for it? This will surprise you because it is so little, I suppose, as standards generally go of people in public life.

First of all, we've got a house in Washington, which cost 41,000 dollars and on which we owe 20,000 dollars. We have a house in Whittier, California which cost 13,000 dollars and on which we owe 3000 dollars. My folks are living there at the present time. I have just 4000 dollars in life insurance, plus my GI policy which I've never been able to convert, and which will run out in two years. I have no life insurance whatever on Pat. I have no life insurance on our two youngsters, Tricia and Julie. I own a 1950 Oldsmobile car. We have our furniture. We have no stocks and bonds of any type. We have no interest of any kind, direct or indirect, in any business. Now, that's what we have. What do we owe?

Well in addition to the mortgage, the 20,000 dollar mortgage on the house in Washington, the 10,000 dollar one on the house in Whittier, I owe 4500 dollars to the Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C., with interest 4 and 1/2 percent. I owe 3500 dollars to my parents, and the interest on that loan, which I pay regularly, because it's the part of the savings they made through the years they were working so hard -- I pay regularly 4 percent interest. And then I have a 500 dollar loan, which I have on my life insurance.

Well, that's about it. That's what we have. And that's what we owe. It isn't very much. But Pat and I have the satisfaction that every dime that we've got is honestly ours. I should say this, that Pat doesn't have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat, and I always tell her she'd look good in anything.

One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don't they'll probably be saying this about me, too. We did get something, a gift, after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog. And believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore, saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was? It was a little cocker spaniel dog in a crate that he'd sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted. And our little girl Tricia, the six year old, named it "Checkers." And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep it.

It isn't easy to come before a nationwide audience and bare your life, as I've done. But I want to say some things before I conclude that I think most of you will agree on. Mr. Mitchell, the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, made this statement -- that if a man

couldn't afford to be in the United States Senate, he shouldn't run for the Senate. And I just want to make my position clear. I don't agree with Mr. Mitchell when he says that only a rich man should serve his Government in the United States Senate or in the Congress. I don't believe that represents the thinking of the Democratic Party, and I know that it doesn't represent the thinking of the Republican Party.

I believe that it's fine that a man like Governor Stevenson, who inherited a fortune from his father, can run for President. But I also feel that it's essential in this country of ours that a man of modest means can also run for President, because, you know, remember Abraham Lincoln, you remember what he said: "God must have loved the common people -- he made so many of them."

And now I'm going to suggest some courses of conduct. First of all, you have read in the papers about other funds, now. Mr. Stevenson apparently had a couple -- one of them in which a group of business people paid and helped to supplement the salaries of State employees. Here is where the money went directly into their pockets, and I think that what Mr. Stevenson should do should be to come before the American people, as I have, give the names of the people that contributed to that fund, give the names of the people who put this money into their pockets at the same time that they were receiving money from their State government and see what favors, if any, they gave out for that.

I don't condemn Mr. Stevenson for what he did, but until the facts are in there is a doubt that will be raised. And as far as Mr. Sparkman is concerned, I would suggest the same thing. He's had his wife on the payroll. I don't condemn him for that, but I think that he should come before the American people and indicate what outside sources of income he has had. I would suggest that under the circumstances both Mr. Sparkman and Mr. Stevenson should come before the American people, as I have, and make a complete financial statement as to their financial history, and if they don't it will be an admission that they have something to hide. And I think you will agree with me -- because, folks, remember, a man that's to be President of the United States, a man that's to be Vice President of the United States, must have the confidence of all the people. And that's why I'm doing what I'm doing. And that's why I suggest that Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Sparkman, since they are under attack, should do what they're doing.

Now let me say this: I know that this is not the last of the smears. In spite of my explanation tonight, other smears will be made. Others have been made in the past. And the purpose of the smears, I know, is this: to silence me; to make me let up. Well, they just don't know who they're dealing with. I'm going to tell you this: I remember in the dark days of the Hiss case some of the same columnists, some of the same radio commentators who are attacking me now and misrepresenting my position, were violently opposing me at the time I was after Alger Hiss. But I continued to fight because I knew I was right, and I can say to this great television and radio audience that I have no apologies to the American people for my part in putting Alger Hiss where he is today. And as far as this is concerned, I intend to continue to fight.

Why do I feel so deeply? Why do I feel that in spite of the smears, the misunderstanding, the necessity for a man to come up here and bare his soul as I have -- why is it necessary for me to continue this fight? And I want to tell you why. Because, you see, I love my country. And I think my country is in danger. And I think the only man that can save America at this time is the man that's running for President, on my ticket -- Dwight Eisenhower. You say, "Why do I think it is in danger?" And I say, look at the record. Seven years of the Truman-Acheson Administration, and what's happened? Six hundred million people lost to the Communists. And a war in Korea in which we have lost 117,000 American casualties, and I say to all of you that a policy that results in the loss of 600 million people to the Communists, and a war which cost us 117,000 American casualties isn't good enough for America. And I say that those in the State Department that made the mistakes which caused that war and which resulted in those losses should be kicked out of the State Department just as fast as we get them out of there.

And let me say that I know Mr. Stevenson won't do that because he defends the Truman policy, and I know that Dwight Eisenhower will do that, and that he will give America the leadership that it needs. Take the problem of corruption. You've read about the mess in Washington. Mr. Stevenson can't clean it up because he was picked by the man, Truman, under whose Administration the mess was made. You wouldn't trust the man who made the mess to clean it up. That's Truman. And by the same token you can't trust the man who was picked by the man that made the mess to clean it up -- and that's Stevenson.

And so I say, Eisenhower, who owed nothing to Truman, nothing to the big city bosses -- he is the man that can clean up the mess in Washington. Take Communism. I say that as far as that subject is concerned the danger is great to America. In the Hiss case they got the secrets which enabled them to break the American secret State Department code. They got secrets in the atomic bomb case which enabled them to get the secret of the atomic bomb five years before they would have gotten it by their own devices. And I say that any man who called the Alger Hiss case a red herring isn't fit to be President of the United States. I say that a man who, like Mr. Stevenson, has pooh-poohed and ridiculed the Communist threat in the United States -- he said that they are phantoms among ourselves. He has accused us that have attempted to expose the Communists, of looking for Communists in the Bureau of Fisheries and Wildlife. I say that a man who says *that* isn't qualified to be President of the United States. And I say that the only man who can lead us in this fight to rid the Government of both those who are Communists and those who have corrupted this Government is Eisenhower, because Eisenhower, you can be sure, recognizes the problem, and he knows how to deal with it.

Now let me that finally, this evening, I want to read to you, just briefly, excerpts from a letter which I received, a letter which after all this is over no one can take away from us. It reads as follows:

Dear Senator Nixon,

Since I am only 19 years of age, I can't vote in this presidential election, but believe me if I could you and General Eisenhower would certainly get my vote. My husband is in the Fleet Marines in Korea. He's a corpsman on the front lines and we have a two month old son he's never seen. And I feel confident that with great Americans like you and General Eisenhower in the White House, lonely Americans like myself will be united with their loved ones now in Korea. I only pray to God that you won't be too late. Enclosed is a small check to help you in your campaign. Living on \$85 a month, it is all I can afford at present, but let me know what else I can do.

Folks, it's a check for 10 dollars, and it's one that I will never cash. And just let me say this: We hear a lot about prosperity these days, but I say why can't we have prosperity built on peace, rather than prosperity built on war? Why can't we have prosperity and an honest Government in Washington, D.C., at the same time? Believe me, we can. And Eisenhower is the man that can lead this crusade to bring us that kind of prosperity.

And now, finally, I know that you wonder whether or not I am going to stay on the Republican ticket or resign. Let me say this: I don't believe that I ought to quit, because I am not a quitter. And, incidentally, Pat's not a quitter. After all, her name was Patricia Ryan and she was born on St. Patrick's day, and you know the Irish never quit.

But the decision, my friends, is not mine. I would do nothing that would harm the possibilities of Dwight Eisenhower to become President of the United States. And for that reason I am submitting to the Republican National Committee tonight through this television broadcast the decision which it is theirs to make. Let them decide whether my position on the ticket will help or hurt. And I am going to ask you to help them decide. Wire and write the Republican National Committee whether you think I should stay on or whether I should get off. And whatever their decision is, I will abide by it.

But just let me say this last word: Regardless of what happens, I'm going to continue this fight. I'm going to campaign up and down in America until we drive the crooks and the Communists and those that defend them out of Washington. And remember folks, Eisenhower is a great man, believe me. He's a great man. And a vote for Eisenhower is a vote for what's good for America. And what's good for America....[interrupted by broadcaster]

Right to Vote

-Lyndon B. Johnson

I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of Democracy. I urge every member of both parties, Americans of all religions and of all colors, from every section of this country, to join me in that cause.

At times, history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama. There, long suffering men and women peacefully protested the denial of their rights as Americans. Many of them were brutally assaulted. One good man--a man of God--was killed.

There is no cause for pride in what has happened in Selma. There is no cause for self-satisfaction in the long denial of equal rights of millions of Americans. But there is cause for hope and for faith in our Democracy in what is happening here tonight. For the cries of pain and the hymns and protests of oppressed people have summoned into convocation all the majesty of this great government--the government of the greatest nation on earth. Our mission is at once the oldest and the most basic of this country--to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man. In our time we have come to live with the moments of great crises. Our lives have been marked with debate about great issues, issues of war and peace, issues of prosperity and depression.

But rarely in any time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, or our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved nation. The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such an issue. And should we defeat every enemy, and should we double our wealth and conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation. For, with a country as with a person, "what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem.

And we are met here tonight as Americans--not as Democrats or Republicans; we're met here as Americans to solve that problem. This was the first nation in the history of the world to be founded with a purpose.

The great phrases of that purpose still sound in every American heart, North and South: "All men are created equal." "Government by consent of the governed." "Give me liberty or give me death." And those are not just clever words, and those are not just empty theories. In their name Americans have fought and died for two centuries and tonight around the world they

stand there as guardians of our liberty risking their lives. Those words are promised to every citizen that he shall share in the dignity of man. This dignity cannot be found in a man's possessions. It cannot be found in his power or in his position. It really rests on his right to be treated as a man equal in opportunity to all others. It says that he shall share in freedom. He shall choose his leaders, educate his children, provide for his family according to his ability and his merits as a human being.

To apply any other test, to deny a man his hopes because of his color or race or his religion or the place of his birth is not only to do injustice, it is to deny Americans and to dishonor the dead who gave their lives for American freedom. Our fathers believed that if this noble view of the rights of man was to flourish it must be rooted in democracy. This most basic right of all was the right to choose your own leaders. The history of this country in large measure is the history of expansion of the right to all of our people.

Many of the issues of civil rights are very complex and most difficult. But about this there can and should be no argument: every American citizen must have an equal right to vote. There is no reason which can excuse the denial of that right. There is no duty which weighs more heavily on us than the duty we have to insure that right. Yet the harsh fact is that in many places in this country men and women are kept from voting simply because they are Negroes.

Every device of which human ingenuity is capable, has been used to deny this right. The Negro citizen may go to register only to be told that the day is wrong, or the hour is late, or the official in charge is absent. And if he persists and, if he manages to present himself to the registrar, he may be disqualified because he did not spell out his middle name, or because he abbreviated a word on the application. And if he manages to fill out an application, he is given a test. The registrar is the sole judge of whether he passes this test. He may be asked to recite the entire Constitution, or explain the most complex provisions of state law.

And even a college degree cannot be used to prove that he can read and write. For the fact is that the only way to pass these barriers is to show a white skin. Experience has clearly shown that the existing process of law cannot overcome systematic and ingenious discrimination. No law that we now have on the books, and I have helped to put three of them there, can insure the right to vote when local officials are determined to deny it. In such a case, our duty must be clear to all of us. The Constitution says that no person shall be kept from voting because of his race or his color.

We have all sworn an oath before God to support and to defend that Constitution. We must now act in obedience to that oath. Wednesday, I will send to Congress a law designed to eliminate illegal barriers to the right to vote. The broad principles of that bill will be in the hands of the Democratic and Republican leaders tomorrow. After they have reviewed it, it will come here formally as a bill. I am grateful for this opportunity to come here tonight at the invitation of the leadership to reason with my friends, to give them my views and to visit with my former colleagues.

I have had prepared a more comprehensive analysis of the legislation which I had intended to transmit to the clerk tomorrow, but which I will submit to the clerks tonight. But I want to really discuss the main proposals of this legislation. This bill will strike down restrictions to voting in all elections, federal, state and local, which have been used to deny Negroes the right to vote.

This bill will establish a simple, uniform standard which cannot be used, however ingenious the effort, to flout our Constitution. It will provide for citizens to be registered by officials of the United States Government, if the state officials refuse to register them. It will eliminate tedious, unnecessary lawsuits which delay the right to vote. Finally, this legislation will insure that properly registered individuals are not prohibited from voting. I will welcome the suggestions from all the members of Congress--I have no doubt that I will get some--on ways and means to strengthen this law and to make it effective.

But experience has plainly shown that this is the only path to carry out the command of the Constitution. To those who seek to avoid action by their national government in their home communities, who want to and who seek to maintain purely local control over elections, the answer is simple: open your polling places to all your people. Allow men and women to register and vote whatever the color of their skin. Extend the rights of citizenship to every citizen of this land. There is no Constitutional issue here. The command of the Constitution is plain. There is no moral issue. It is wrong--deadly wrong--to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country.

There is no issue of state's rights or national rights. There is only the struggle for human rights. I have not the slightest doubt what will be your answer. But the last time a President sent a civil rights bill to the Congress it contained a provision to protect voting rights in Federal elections. That civil rights bill was passed after eight long months of debate. And when that bill came to my desk from the Congress for signature, the heart of the voting provision had been eliminated.

This time, on this issue, there must be no delay, or no hesitation, or no compromise with our purpose. We cannot, we must not, refuse to protect the right of every American to vote in every election that he may desire to participate in.

And we ought not, and we cannot, and we must not wait another eight months before we get a bill. We have already waited 100 years and more and the time for waiting is gone. So I ask you to join me in working long hours and nights and weekends, if necessary, to pass this bill. And I don't make that request lightly, for, from the window where I sit, with the problems of our country, I recognize that from outside this chamber is the outraged conscience of a nation, the grave concern of many nations and the harsh judgment of history on our acts.

But even if we pass this bill the battle will not be over. What happened in Selma is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and state of America. It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessings of American life. Their cause

must be our cause too. Because it's not just Negroes, but really it's all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice.

And we shall overcome.

As a man whose roots go deeply into Southern soil, I know how agonizing racial feelings are. I know how difficult it is to reshape the attitudes and the structure of our society. But a century has passed--more than 100 years--since the Negro was freed. And he is not fully free tonight. It was more than 100 years ago that Abraham Lincoln--a great President of another party--signed the Emancipation Proclamation. But emancipation is a proclamation and not a fact.

A century has passed--more than 100 years--since equality was promised, and yet the Negro is not equal. A century has passed since the day of promise, and the promise is unkept. The time of justice has now come, and I tell you that I believe sincerely that no force can hold it back. It is right in the eyes of man and God that it should come, and when it does, I think that day will brighten the lives of every American. For Negroes are not the only victims. How many white children have gone uneducated? How many white families have lived in stark poverty? How many white lives have been scarred by fear, because we wasted energy and our substance to maintain the barriers of hatred and terror?

And so I say to all of you here and to all in the nation tonight that those who appeal to you to hold on to the past do so at the cost of denying you your future. This great rich, restless country can offer opportunity and education and hope to all--all, black and white, North and South, sharecropper and city dweller. These are the enemies: poverty, ignorance, disease. They are our enemies, not our fellow man, not our neighbor.

And these enemies too--poverty, disease and ignorance--we shall overcome.

Now let none of us in any section look with prideful righteousness on the troubles in another section or the problems of our neighbors. There is really no part of America where the promise of equality has been fully kept. In Buffalo as well as in Birmingham, in Philadelphia as well as Selma, Americans are struggling for the fruits of freedom.

This is one nation. What happens in Selma and Cincinnati is a matter of legitimate concern to every American. But let each of us look within our own hearts and our own communities and let each of us put our shoulder to the wheel to root out injustice wherever it exists. As we meet here in this peaceful historic chamber tonight, men from the South, some of whom were at Iwo Jima, men from the North who have carried Old Glory to the far corners of the world and who brought it back without a stain on it, men from the east and from the west are all fighting together without regard to religion or color or region in Vietnam.

Men from every region fought for us across the world 20 years ago. And now in these common dangers, in these common sacrifices, the South made its contribution of honor and gallantry no less than any other region in the great republic.

And in some instances, a great many of them, more. And I have not the slightest doubt that good men from everywhere in this country, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Golden Gate to the harbors along the Atlantic, will rally now together in this cause to vindicate the freedom of all Americans. For all of us owe this duty and I believe that all of us will respond to it.

Your president makes that request of every American.

The real hero of this struggle is the American Negro. His actions and protests, his courage to risk safety, and even to risk his life, have awakened the conscience of this nation. His demonstrations have been designed to call attention to injustice, designed to provoke change; designed to stir reform. He has been called upon to make good the promise of America.

And who among us can say that we would have made the same progress were it not for his persistent bravery and his faith in American democracy? For at the real heart of the battle for equality is a deep-seated belief in the democratic process. Equality depends, not on the force of arms or tear gas, but depends upon the force of moral right--not on recourse to violence, but on respect for law and order.

There have been many pressures upon your President and there will be others as the days come and go. But I pledge to you tonight that we intend to fight this battle where it should be fought--in the courts, and in the Congress, and the hearts of men. We must preserve the right of free speech and the right of free assembly. But the right of free speech does not carry with it--as has been said--the right to holler fire in a crowded theatre.

We must preserve the right to free assembly. But free assembly does not carry with it the right to block public thoroughfares to traffic. We do have a right to protest. And a right to march under conditions that do not infringe the Constitutional rights of our neighbors. And I intend to protect all those rights as long as I am permitted to serve in this office.

We will guard against violence, knowing it strikes from our hands the very weapons which we seek--progress, obedience to law, and belief in American values. In Selma, as elsewhere, we seek and pray for peace. We seek order, we seek unity, but we will not accept the peace of stifled rights or the order imposed by fear, or the unity that stifles protest--for peace cannot be purchased at the cost of liberty.

In Selma tonight--and we had a good day there--as in every city we are working for a just and peaceful settlement. We must all remember after this speech I'm making tonight, after the police and the F.B.I. and the Marshals have all gone, and after you have promptly passed this bill, the people of Selma and the other cities of the nation must still live and work together.

And when the attention of the nation has gone elsewhere they must try to heal the wounds and to build a new community. This cannot be easily done on a battleground of violence as the history of the South itself shows. It is in recognition of this that men of both races have

shown such an outstandingly impressive responsibility in recent days--last Tuesday and again today.

The bill I am presenting to you will be known as a civil rights bill. But in a larger sense, most of the program I am recommending is a civil rights program. Its object is to open the city of hope to all people of all races, because all Americans just must have the right to vote, and we are going to give them that right.

All Americans must have the privileges of citizenship, regardless of race, and they are going to have those privileges of citizenship regardless of race.

But I would like to caution you and remind you that to exercise these privileges takes much more than just legal rights. It requires a trained mind and a healthy body. It requires a decent home and the chance to find a job and the opportunity to escape from the clutches of poverty.

Of course people cannot contribute to the nation if they are never taught to read or write; if their bodies are stunted from hunger; if their sickness goes untended; if their life is spent in hopeless poverty, just drawing a welfare check.

So we want to open the gates to opportunity. But we're also going to give all our people, black and white, the help that they need to walk through those gates. My first job after college was as a teacher in Cotulla, Texas, in a small Mexican-American school. Few of them could speak English and I couldn't speak much Spanish. My students were poor and they often came to class without breakfast and hungry. And they knew even in their youth the pain of prejudice. They never seemed to know why people disliked them, but they knew it was so because I saw it in their eyes.

I often walked home late in the afternoon after the classes were finished wishing there was more that I could do. But all I knew was to teach them the little that I knew, hoping that I might help them against the hardships that lay ahead. And somehow you never forget what poverty and hatred can do when you see its scars on the hopeful face of a young child.

I never thought then, in 1928, that I would be standing here in 1965. It never even occurred to me in my fondest dreams that I might have the chance to help the sons and daughters of those students, and to help people like them all over this country. But now I do have that chance.

And I'll let you in on a secret--I mean to use it. And I hope that you will use it with me.

This is the richest, most powerful country which ever occupied this globe. The might of past empires is little compared to ours. But I do not want to be the president who built empires, or sought grandeur, or extended dominion.

I want to be the president who educated young children to the wonders of their world. I want to be the President who helped to feed the hungry and to prepare them to be taxpayers instead

of tax eaters. I want to be the President who helped the poor to find their own way and who protected the right of every citizen to vote in every election. I want to be the President who helped to end hatred among his fellow men and who promoted love among the people of all races, all regions and all parties. I want to be the President who helped to end war among the brothers of this earth.

And so, at the request of your beloved Speaker and the Senator from Montana, the Majority Leader, the Senator from Illinois, the Minority Leader, Mr. McCulloch and other members of both parties, I came here tonight, not as President Roosevelt came down one time in person to veto a bonus bill; not as President Truman came down one time to urge passage of a railroad bill, but I came down here to ask you to share this task with me. And to share it with the people that we both work for.

I want this to be the Congress--Republicans and Democrats alike--which did all these things for all these people. Beyond this great chamber--out yonder--in fifty states are the people that we serve. Who can tell what deep and unspoken hopes are in their hearts tonight as they sit there and listen? We all can guess, from our own lives, how difficult they often find their own pursuit of happiness, how many problems each little family has. They look most of all to themselves for their future, but I think that they also look to each of us.

Above the pyramid on the Great Seal of the United States it says in Latin, "God has favored our undertaking." God will not favor everything that we do. It is rather our duty to divine His will. But I cannot help but believe that He truly understands and that He really favors the undertaking that we begin here tonight.